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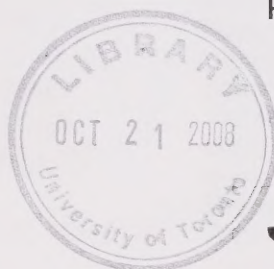
Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 39th Parliament

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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)



Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 22 September 2008

Lundi 22 septembre 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 22 September 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 22 septembre 2008

*The House met at 0900.
Prayers.*

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INCREASING ACCESS TO QUALIFIED HEALTH PROFESSIONALS FOR ONTARIANS ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 VISANT À ACCROÎTRE L'ACCÈS DES ONTARIENNES ET DES ONTARIENS AUX PROFESSIONNELS DE LA SANTÉ QUALIFIÉS

Mr. Caplan moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 97, An Act to increase access to qualified health professionals for all Ontarians by amending the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 / Projet de loi 97, Loi visant à accroître l'accès des Ontariennes et des Ontariens aux professionnels de la santé qualifiés en modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate? Minister of Health.

Hon. David Caplan: It is truly an honour for me to rise here today as Ontario's Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I will be sharing my time during this debate with my very able parliamentary assistant, the member from Etobicoke—Lakeshore.

As you know, today's agenda includes second reading of our government's proposed legislation, Increasing Access to Qualified Health Professionals for Ontarians Act, which I'll refer to as Bill 97. This bill was introduced in the last legislative session by my predecessor, Minister George Smitherman, based on the work of the member from Etobicoke—Lakeshore's—Laurel Broten's—comprehensive report on removing barriers for international medical doctors. I trust that the member will be discussing this in debate later this morning. This bill is a continuation of our government's tireless efforts to systematically remove barriers for internationally trained physicians and other health professionals.

I think it's important to note that the core of our success is in recognizing that the challenge is a shared responsibility—responsibility between government, the educational institutions and the regulatory colleges. Each partner has a critical role to play in making sure that

Ontario is best positioned to compete in an international market by being an employer of first choice. Bill 97 recognizes this shared role by expanding the mandate of all of Ontario's 23 health regulatory colleges to acknowledge that access to health care is a matter of public interest. That's a very critical element of Bill 97, because traditionally, the colleges have worked to protect the public, setting standards around registration and practice. Today's bill, Bill 97, recognizes that it's not only important to protect the public from bad practices, but that improving access to health care services must remain our collective goal and a shared responsibility, as I've mentioned. This is an important priority for this government. We've been working hard to increase the number of doctors working in Ontario's health system. In fact, Ontario has already grown its capacity for integrating and welcoming internationally educated physicians to the province by more than doubling the number of training spots, residency spots, for physicians coming from other jurisdictions over the last four years. In fact, today in Ontario, we have more than 630 internationally educated health care professionals training within our world-class medical education institutions. I'm pleased to tell you that Ontarians already do have the services of more than 5,000 internationally trained doctors right across the province. These 5,000 physicians represent almost a quarter of our physician workforce, and they are a vital part of a strong and diverse medical community.

We've worked tirelessly to create pathways for those who previously have not had a route to practice in this province. Today, the debate and the consideration of this bill, brought forth by my predecessor, Minister Smitherman, allows us to take the next step in removing barriers by helping to ease the way for qualified international medical graduates, otherwise known as IMGs, and other internationally educated health professionals as well, to enter our health care system.

Bill 97 further dismantles some of the barriers that prevent qualified, competent, practice-ready, internationally trained physicians to provide care to Ontarians. By creating a shared sense of purpose and urgency around the need to fast-track the practice-ready physicians to work in Ontario as soon as possible, we have already begun to reap the rewards of this important partnership with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario. I'm pleased to tell you, Speaker, and to inform this House that over the summer we have begun collaborating with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario on changes that would ease the transition to practice for internationally trained doctors. The college's co-opera-

tion is vital to accomplish the goals that we've set out. Last Thursday, just last week, on September 18, the college passed a motion to make it possible for doctors fully licensed and practising in the United States or other parts of Canada to become registered in Ontario without further training or additional exams.

I want to congratulate the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario for their demonstrated leadership in working with this government to make health care more available and more accessible to Ontarians. The college has worked diligently to remove barriers to physicians to register in Ontario, and they are doing so in a manner that will accomplish our goals around access to health care services without compromising the standards that our citizens expect from their physicians.

Let me tell you more about the government's success to date. In addition to the over 630 international medical graduates who currently take advantage of our government's funded training and assessment opportunities in Ontario, the province exceeded its target in 2007-08 and offered 235 IMG training or assessment positions in that year. We expect the total number of positions offered for 2008-09 to exceed last year's record-breaking total.

The 2008 College of Physicians and Surgeons reported that the number of full-practice certificates issued this year to IMGs was the highest in over two decades. That statistic also marks a long record of an increasing number of certificates for IMGs. Bill 97, therefore, is of vital importance to Ontarians—vital because it would improve their access to family doctors by making it easier for qualified, internationally trained doctors to practise here in the province.

0910

Bill 97 is intrinsic to meeting the two principal priorities that our government has defined for health care over the next few years and that Ontarians overwhelmingly endorsed about a year ago. Our first priority is reducing wait times, with a focus in particular on emergency departments. Our second priority is improving access to high-quality family health care.

We chose those priorities carefully, and it's critical to the continued success of Ontario's health system transformation, as well as for the well-being of the people of Ontario. In this regard, Bill 97 would help to increase the supply of doctors needed here in the province today and in the future. That's particularly important in helping to ensure that people have access to health care in the community rather than relying upon emergency departments for non-emergency health care.

I urge all members of this House to fully support Bill 97, to make sure that no one living in this province must make do without a doctor.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I'm very pleased to have an opportunity to join Minister Caplan and speak in support of Bill 97, Increasing Access to Qualified Health Professionals for Ontarians Act, 2008. I want to begin with special thanks to Minister Caplan, former Minister of

Health George Smitherman and the Premier for their unwavering support of a vast array of legislative, budgetary and policy initiatives that form part of our government's comprehensive plan to improve access to care as well as to further opportunity for internationally trained doctors seeking to practise medicine in Ontario.

Since 2003, our government has taken many significant steps to increase access to health care and to remove barriers for international medical doctors. When our government came into office in 2003, one of the first things we did was increase residency training positions so that more international medical graduates could get the training they needed so that their skills would be best put to use on behalf of Ontarians. Today, more than 5,000 internationally trained doctors are practising in Ontario, representing almost one quarter of the physician workforce. Approximately 630 IMGs are currently in residency training, and we have made significant financial investments to support the training and assessment of internationally trained doctors through the operation of HealthForceOntario's Access Centre for Internationally Educated Health Professionals and the Centre for the Evaluation of Health Professionals Educated Abroad.

But, despite our best efforts, barriers remain. Bill 97 is the next step in breaking down these barriers, a step that began almost one year ago when I was asked by our then-Minister of Health George Smitherman to chart a way forward that would break down the barriers that prevent internationally trained doctors from entering into practice in Ontario.

Knowledge of the existence of these barriers is not new, and unfortunately, it is one with which we are all too familiar. You only need to pick up a newspaper or watch the evening news. It is the stories of the lives of internationally trained medical doctors and the reality of the lives that they live, here in Canada or abroad seeking to come to Ontario, that warmed my heart, but also made my heart heavy. It is an issue that I spoke about in my maiden speech upon my election in 2003, and I am committed to seeing that real and meaningful progress is made so that we can better welcome and integrate international medical doctors into our province. It is in this aim that our government seeks to put in place Bill 97, Increasing Access to Qualified Health Professionals for Ontarians Act.

Bill 97 would, if passed, change the mandate of all regulatory colleges to acknowledge, for the first time ever, that access to skilled and competent health professionals is a matter of public interest. Our aging population, shifting demographics within the health care profession and Ontarians' desire to provide safe, accessible, patient-centred health care demand that we accelerate and improve the integration of international medical doctors as part of a comprehensive health human resource strategy.

Bill 97 lays the foundation for the college to work with our government to break down the barriers preventing internationally trained medical doctors and graduates from practising in Ontario. Bill 97 is one part of our government's action plan for change.

The five-point action plan for change set out in my report on removing barriers for international medical doctors has as its goal improved access to health care by accrediting more internationally trained doctors, and includes fast-tracking, simplifying and streamlining the registration process for doctors already practising in Canada, the US or any other country with a comparable health care system to our own; helping internationally trained doctors enter medical practice in Ontario with the creation of a transitional licence, which will allow them to practise under supervision while they complete required education or gain specific practical experience; undertaking assessments more efficiently to allow internationally trained doctors to get on with their education and integrate into the Ontario medical system; providing individualized bridging support, which would include cultural and language education, mentorship and hands-on training; and developing coordinated, individualized assistance for those seeking to transfer their international medical skills and knowledge into another area of the health profession or related career.

In seeking to relocate to Ontario, internationally trained doctors face a number of barriers including lack of Canadian job experience and references, challenges with respect to credential recognition, misinformation regarding certification and registration, and in some instances, limited language and communications skills. This action plan seeks to assess and assist candidates based on their individual skills and educational background.

Since the release of the action plan in June, in a matter of days we moved forward to improve access and remove barriers that exist, beginning by introducing legislation that makes access to health professionals a matter of public interest and puts in place a legislative framework that better reflects the partnership that must exist between the government and the regulatory colleges when it comes to ensuring access to quality medical care in Ontario. I can't think of a better way to demonstrate our government's commitment to health human resources in our province than by partnering and working in consultation with our 23 regulated health professions to ensure that Ontarians have access to skilled and qualified health professionals to provide them with the care they need, because this is truly, truly in the public interest.

I want to take a moment to thank the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, with whom we have been working in partnership over the summer to ease the way to practice for internationally trained doctors. In fact, just this past week, the CPSO approved proposals in order to allow doctors licensed in other parts of Canada and the US to move to practice in Ontario without further training or additional examinations. The new policy will come into effect December 1. This is a significant move forward for those doctors already practising in Canada or the US who want to relocate to Ontario.

The next step for the CPSO is to facilitate registration for physicians from other jurisdictions beyond North America with a comparable health care system to our

own. Consultations with respect to these pathways to registration are currently being undertaken by the CPSO, and we look forward to continuing to work with them to break down more barriers for these international medical doctors.

I want to extend my appreciation for the work done by the dedicated professionals at the Ministry of Health as well as at HealthForceOntario, when it comes to meeting Ontario's health human resource needs, in particular with respect to opening doors for internationally trained doctors.

I also want to take a moment to thank the more than 100 municipalities that came forward to our government to indicate their support and encouragement for the work we were undertaking, in partnership with them as well, as they seek to work with us to ensure that communities right around the province have the access to the medical professions and care they need. I look forward, as we continue debate on this bill, to sharing with this Legislature some of the many communities that came forward in support of this legislation.

Ontario has the opportunity to take some very bold steps. A healthy Ontario means access to safe, quality health care services. Too many Ontarians do not have access to a family physician, yet every day we are reminded that there are many, many qualified, safe and competent international medical doctors who have chosen or would choose to come to Ontario but who cannot practise medicine here.

0920

Bill 97 is one part of our government's comprehensive plan to bring Ontario into the 21st century, to improve access to medical care in our province and make real and meaningful progress when it comes to better welcoming and integrating international medical doctors. I hope that all members of this House will join us in this endeavour and stand in support of Bill 97. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments? The member for Parry Sound-Muskoka.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to comment on Bill 97, An Act to increase access to qualified health professionals for all Ontarians by amending the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991. My comment is, it's about time this government did something to address a very serious shortage of doctors, nurses and other health professionals. Certainly, the government has been missing in action this summer as we've moved from one crisis to another.

This Liberal government of Mr. McGuinty has been in power now for five years. Over that time, the doctor shortage and the nursing and other health professional shortages have been getting worse. In fact, recently I was cc-ed from my own riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka on a letter from West Parry Sound Health Centre, Lakeland long-term care and Belvedere Heights long-term-care home written to the College of Nurses emphasizing the nursing crisis that they are facing and suggesting some improvements: first, graduate more nurses; second,

match some of the other provinces, the one-year permits instead of the six-month permit, as I believe we have here in the province; and making opportunities to hire third-year nurses, as other provinces do.

But here we are five years into this government and things are getting worse. And what do they bring in? They bring in a one-page bill to address the crisis, where they just put a little more responsibility on the College of Nurses. That's their answer to the crisis that's been building for the last five years. I think, as has been the case over the summer, this government is still missing in action. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments? The member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise in the House this morning to speak about Bill 97. The NDP certainly has a proud and long history in Canada of leading efforts to improve access to public health care for all people. We welcome legislation that will improve the effectiveness of our health care system and that will strengthen medicare.

I also take this opportunity on the first day of this new session to congratulate MPP Laurel Broten for the work that she has done in her report on removing barriers for international medical doctors, which she submitted March 31. The report is at the base of the new law. It is a report that is well researched. It looks at other professions in Ontario. It looks at the way other provinces in Canada do their recruitment. It also gives us a worldwide perspective as to how recruitment can be done. It was certainly well written, worth reading, and a good piece of research done by this honourable member. I wanted to take this opportunity to congratulate her on that work.

Bill 97 talks about international medical graduates. Although the title of it talks about many health professionals, it is really focused on physicians. The move done by the CPSO, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, certainly goes in this direction. I would say it's a bill whose time has come. For physicians practising elsewhere—basically, physicians who are practice-ready who live here in Canada certainly had a hard time coming into Ontario. This should make it a little bit easier. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments? The member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'd like to echo the comments of my colleague from Nickel Belt and praise the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore for an outstanding report, on which Bill 97 is based. It certainly brings to bear not merely her own legal training but her many years of advocacy in this and other similar issues.

Why do we need to do this? There are a number of fundamental reasons why our government in Ontario needs to act and continue to act. Rapid growth is one. In the next 12 to 15 years in the GTA alone, the population is going to grow by four million people—not grow to, but grow by, four million people. There are already existing

shortages in various critical areas. For example, in my own area in western Mississauga, what we need are vascular surgeons. We have not merely a number of vacancies, but those who perform the work are getting on in years. In many other areas, anaesthetists—a word I always have trouble spelling—are in very short supply. Many of today's doctors are baby boomers, just like many of us around the House. These are all men and women between the ages of 42 and 62. Sooner or later they're all going to retire, and to our health system, it's going to seem like they all retire over the same weekend.

This bill contains the needed due diligence to ensure that the quality and standards required are maintained. As one physician in our area put it when he was chatting with me in a meeting not that long ago, "You know, when I was trained in Egypt, men and women had two arms and two legs, one in each corner, and fundamentally, when you open them up and practise on them, everything is still in the same place here. We all have to learn the way Canada does medicine, but our skills transfer transparently."

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments? The member from Wellington—Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: It's great to be back, and I'm pleased to have this opportunity to reply briefly to the new Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, as well as his parliamentary assistant. I do want to congratulate the new minister on his new responsibilities. I look forward to working with him, as I've got a whole file of problems in my office, and I'm going to be bringing them to your attention; you can be assured of that.

We all know that the government took the summer off, and unfortunately there are a lot of problems before the Legislature today that remain unsolved and unresolved. So we've got a lot of work to do this fall, Madam Speaker, as you well know.

Bill 97, An Act to increase access to qualified health professionals for all Ontarians by amending the Regulated Health Professions Act, which we're discussing this morning, is one page. It looks more like a private member's bill than anything else, but I understand that the government is trying to make a point that they are going to be forcing the regulated health profession colleges "to work in consultation with the minister ... to ensure, as a matter of public interest, that the people of Ontario have access to adequate numbers of qualified, skilled and competent regulated health professionals."

This bill is fine. It just appears to be an effort by the government to shift the blame for the problems, in terms of adequate numbers of health professionals, onto the colleges. As we know, there needs to be a great deal of action on the part of the government to resolve this problem. Certainly, enhancing and increasing the number of international medical graduates will go some way to help solve the problem. But as we know, there are about a million Ontarians who do not have access to a family doctor at present. They don't have access to that confidential relationship that's based on trust. They're forced

to go through their own devices perhaps to a clinic or whatever medical care they can possibly find, and this is a serious problem that needs to be addressed by this government. As I said, I have a whole list of health issues that I want to raise with this government this fall, and certainly this is one of them—I have constituents who have brought this to my attention. We look forward to positive action from this government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Response?

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I want to thank the members for their comments. I want to reiterate that Bill 97 is part of our government's comprehensive plan to break down the barriers for internationally trained medical doctors. The bill places a duty on health regulatory colleges to work in partnership with the government. That is a type of approach that our government has taken since first being elected in 2003: working in partnership with those stakeholders and with communities that are seeking to put in place the same type of structures, breaking down barriers and increasing access to health care right across the province.

I would say to the members opposite who are critical of Bill 97 that they need to make sure they get in better touch with the communities they represent, communities that I can name—Bancroft, McKellar, Erin, Wellington North, Halton Hills.

0930

Many communities in and around the areas that colleagues on the other side of the House have the opportunity to represent have taken the time, have passed resolutions, have come forward to our government saying that they support the steps that are being taken because they too want to work in partnership with the province to increase access and break down those barriers. The partnership approach is working, it has worked. We've seen progress since the June introduction of this bill and the release of the report through to amendments brought forward by the CPSO last week, with respect to those physicians who are currently practising in the US or in other provinces who may seek or want to relocate into Ontario to make sure that Ontarians have increased access to physicians and the health care that they need.

The partnership will continue, the work will continue. We look forward to doing that work and to making sure that this province is one where all Ontarians have access and those barriers have been broken down.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I would like to begin by offering my congratulations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I look forward to working with him. As my colleague has already said, many problems remain in the health system and we hope that, working together and encouraging you to take some steps and your supporting some of the recommendations that we put forward, we can indeed improve the health system in the province of Ontario for the people who live here. The problems, regrettably, are getting worse and, in surveys that have

been undertaken, the public is acknowledging that the situation is worsening. So there's lots of work to do, and we look forward to encouraging you and supporting you in making it better.

I would like to turn now to Bill 97, the Increasing Access to Qualified Health Professionals for Ontarians Act, 2008. I think it is important to point out—because I do believe there has been an attempt on the part of the government to confuse what is actually in Bill 97 and to misrepresent the bill. There is one sentence only in the bill, and that is—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): I would ask the member to just be careful about the rules. Thank you.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I would just remind people in this House and those watching that the bill says only this: "It is the duty of the college to work in consultation with the minister to ensure, as a matter of public interest, that the people of Ontario have access to adequate numbers of qualified, skilled and competent regulated health professionals"—end of the bill.

It doesn't say that this is going to improve access to foreign-trained professionals, as the government likes to tell the press that it does. It doesn't. This bill only says that it's going to force the 23 colleges in this province to take over the responsibility of addressing the shortage of health care professionals.

This bill, in some respects, would be more appropriately entitled an act to download responsibility for the shortage to the colleges. It is shifting the blame for the problem to the colleges. It's an indication that perhaps they've been negligent in the past. It's also an acknowledgement of failure on the part of government to address the needs of Ontarians to ensure that we have the appropriate number of health professionals in the province to meet the needs today and into the future.

Part of the problem is that five years ago when Premier McGuinty was elected, he promised to recruit and retain more doctors. Five years ago, he said that nobody would go without—five years later, and we still have almost one million people without a family doctor.

I just want to give you an example. We have two people who live in the Kawartha Lakes who wrote to us, Michael and Donna Hollingworth. They're two of the about one million Ontarians who don't have a doctor, and they say:

"We have been diligently looking for a doctor since our doctor notified all his patients, through the local press, that he would be ending his practice in Bobcaygeon effective June 26, 2008. Needless to say, we were in shock, and having never been without a doctor, we started looking into our options. We've called medical centres in Peterborough, Lakefield, Bridgenorth and Fenelon Falls, and the response we received was always the same. Right now, we are six months late for our physicals. Fortunately, we are both in good health as retirees in our 60s."

Another example of the one million people who don't have a doctor—we hear from Terry Jackson:

"My husband and I live in Acton, along with my 94-year-old dad. Our doctor, after 20 years, retired. My husband had cancer during this time, so we had no family doctor to follow up with the surgeon. My 94-year-old dad, even though I begged, could not get one of the new doctors to treat him or come to the house for shots for flu. My father was unable to attend the doctor's office, as there were stairs and he is in a wheelchair. My dad has since gone into chronic care, and still no family doctor. It's been an awful two years."

You see, this is the situation in the province of Ontario today. The situation has worsened. Indeed, the number of communities designated as underserved has increased from 2003 from 122 to 139. And they've certainly taken some communities like my own, Kitchener-Waterloo, off the list—and I'll talk about that—recently.

As well, if you take a look, since 2005, the number of doctors who are leaving this province because of the environment in which they're finding it difficult to practise has increased year after year. You know, part of the problem is—I had a call from a family of a woman in her 70s who was to have heart surgery in London. Well, the woman got on the table, the intravenous had been hooked up, and she was told that they couldn't do the operation because there were no beds. "Come back tomorrow at 8 o'clock." Well, the lady came back at 8 o'clock the next morning with her family, and again, no beds. So she was told to come back again the following week, on Tuesday. Now, I can tell you her family doctor was stressed, because he knew his patient needed the operation ASAP.

But, you see, we have a critical shortage of beds in the province, and as a result, surgeries are being cancelled. It's very difficult for family doctors who know that their patients need treatment not to be able to do anything. In fact, I get calls all the time, as do my colleagues, from people who have been told by their family doctors, because they can't get the MRI or they can't get the surgery they need within the period that would be appropriate, "Call your MPP."

This is the system we have in the province of Ontario today: people who are desperate for help, who either don't have a family doctor or who have a family doctor and the family doctor can't get them in to see the specialist that they need for treatment of whatever condition they have. This government has not improved this situation since 2003. As I say, the number of underserved communities has worsened. The number of doctors leaving the province since 2005 has worsened. It's not an environment in which physicians want to practise.

The other thing, of course, that is really of concern to Ontarians—and we see it reflected in some of the letters that I've read—is there are about 2,600 doctors who are nearing retirement age. They could leave at any time. If the situation is dire and a crisis today, it will only worsen. As well, we know, according to the Ontario Medical Association poll, that 83% of people believe the doctor shortage negatively affects economic growth in their

communities. I certainly hear that from chambers of commerce when I travel, that yes, if they don't have the doctors they need, they are not going to be able to attract new businesses to their community. Again, that has an economic impact on communities.

0940

The other issue of real, grave concern is the fact that of the medical school graduates we educate in this province, a third of them are leaving the province within two years of completing their training. So we have a desperate situation. We don't have enough doctors, and this government has failed to live up to the election promise to make sure that we do. This Bill 97 is an admission of failure, and they're saying, "It's now up to you, the colleges, to make sure not only that we have the doctors that we need, but that we have the other 22 health professional groups as well."

I believe this bill shows that the government is abdicating their responsibility. The job was too tough, too difficult, and I guess most of all, they have never had a comprehensive plan of action, which is absolutely necessary and which we have been recommending. We have recommended that the government implement a comprehensive, long-term physician recruitment strategy; moreover—not just physicians, because we have other shortages in this province as well—that they establish an independent human resource planning body for health care professionals.

You see, they haven't identified who is going to live in this province five, 10, 15, 20, 25 years from now. What are the needs of those people going to be, based on the ages of those people? We know that the bulk of those are going to be older people who will require much more care than today, and we need to make sure we have the appropriate health professionals to identify their needs.

I also believe that it's time to create another school of medicine. The last school of medicine was announced in northern Ontario by our government in 2001. We also increased medical spaces. It's time to continue on that path. We need a new medical school. We need to continue to expand the medical spaces in the province of Ontario. Yes, we can break down the barriers for foreign-trained professionals—and we must. However, we need to be able to train our physicians in this province, because the reality is that all other countries throughout the world have similar problems, and we should not be trying to poach health care professionals from other countries who desperately need them as well.

Let's take a look at Bill 97. This is the type of statement that the government makes. On June 16, they said that Ontario is introducing new legislation that would ease the way for internationally trained health care providers to practise in the province. The bill says nothing of the sort. It doesn't mention internationally trained health care providers anywhere in the bill. It's only one sentence. Again, they did the same thing September 19. They boasted that in June the government introduced legislation that would ease the way for internationally trained health care providers. But this bill

makes no reference to international medical graduates or foreign-trained doctors.

When we had estimates this year, because of this statement that didn't seem to align with the one sentence of the bill, I asked the minister, "Where does it say in the bill anything about foreign-trained doctors or international medical graduates?" The minister had to acknowledge and confirm that the bill didn't make any statement. He said that the legislation was a statement to bring influence of the patient's circumstances into the work of the regulatory bodies. So it is certainly not accurate for the government to say that this refers to international medical graduates; it's not there. It's the one sentence, and that's all that it is.

But despite the government's claims to have done so much for foreign-trained professionals, we keep hearing from people who express concern that their experience and their education are not taken into consideration. I received an e-mail on September 21 from Dr. Lisa Yip, who writes, "I was excited to hear the announcement in June" by Minister Smitherman "that the province would be introducing changes to reduce barriers for foreign-trained physicians to practise in Ontario. Many of my colleagues were very pleased when they heard that the government was planning to implement important changes ... to allow well-trained international graduates to practise in Ontario.... Thus, it was to my great disappointment that when I contacted ... to find out how a foreign-trained physician could begin the process of coming to Ontario, I was informed that there were no actual changes in place."

Of course not. The bill doesn't introduce changes.

She goes on to say she's a specialist in Kitchener-Waterloo. She hears about the difficulties patients have in not being able to receive optimal health care due to the lack of physicians, and she says her waiting lists are growing, making it harder for her to provide patients with timely care.

She says she has a brother who was trained outside of Canada. He grew up in Kitchener-Waterloo. Despite the fact that he wanted to get into medical school and the fact that he has a master's degree, he wasn't able to, and he's one of the 200 or so doctors who ended up studying in Ireland. Of course, he's looking to return to Ontario, but she stresses that as a result of him not being able to find a space here, he has had to pay for this entirely at his own cost.

I think this reinforces the need for us to expand the spaces, to have a new medical school, because we can't continue to—we really have a two-tier system. For many, many people, they simply wouldn't have the financial resources to be able to afford to go out of Canada to qualify as a doctor.

She reminds us that there are many foreign-trained Canadian doctors like him who receive their education here and points out that the majority of them don't come back here because, you know what? It has become very difficult if you've trained without any financial support. She says that "despite the excitement generated from the

... announcement in June, it is with great frustration that I find out that there are no actual changes to reduce the barriers."

So despite what the government says, there are some huge problems that do continue, and, as I said before, the bill and what the government is saying don't quite come together.

I guess I would say to you that in Kitchener-Waterloo we had a report come out—and I want to now go beyond just doctors, because we focus on doctors, but we are going to need many, many health care providers in the next 10 years. They actually did a study in my community. It was done by the training board of the Waterloo and Wellington region. It indicates that over the next 10 years, we are going to need an additional 5,000 health care workers. Now, that's a lot, but do you know that that number does not include doctors or pharmacists? That just refers to 16 health care professions that were identified in the report. When the report was released by the Waterloo-Wellington Training and Adjustment Board, Larry Smith, an economics professor at the University of Waterloo, said, "Can you hear this ticking time bomb?" The ticking time bomb of course is that just in Waterloo-Wellington we're going to need 5,000 health care workers over the next 10 years, and that doesn't include pharmacists and it doesn't include doctors. That is quite frightening. Those are the numbers that are going to be required to replace the retirees and to accommodate the population growth from 2008 to 2012. That includes 588 more registered nurses, 511 more personal support workers and 264 more licensed practical nurses. And the retirement bulge, this report points out, is going to be most severe from 2013 to 2017.

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That's why it is so important that this government implement, finally, a comprehensive long-term recruitment strategy and also establish an independent human resource planning body—because we haven't hit the worst yet. In this report they also looked—I've mentioned nurses, RPNs, personal support workers—at dietitians, paramedics, physiotherapists, technologists working in labs, radiation therapy and respiratory therapy.

As I say, that report that required 5,000 more health care workers didn't include doctors and pharmacists. That report also assumed, and probably not accurately, that people wouldn't retire until they were aged 65, and we know that many people do retire before age 65. So this certainly was a concern.

I know that the community was quite surprised at the extent of the projected need, and there was some suggestion that we need to do what we can in order to encourage nurses to postpone retirement. We've talked about doing all we can to make sure that doctors are provided with incentives to postpone their retirement. This is what's happening in our region; this is what's happening in the province. So we need to be taking a look at how we are going to address that particular situation.

Our K-W Record followed up on that particular report because I think everybody was very shocked at the numbers and the fact that it didn't even include doctors or pharmacists. We need to make sure that there is good planning; we need to make sure that we have the appropriate health care workers to respond to the needs of the population; we need to identify what the population is going to be; and, obviously, we need to expand the number of seats in health care courses at both the colleges and the universities, and to encourage more of our students to enter these professions and then stay in them. We know there are people who leave.

I think this report was a warning, and it is a warning that this government cannot ignore. They must take action, and Bill 97 giving responsibility isn't going to solve the problems. This government needs to demonstrate leadership, which they haven't been doing up until this time.

I just want to make reference to some of the nursing shortages that we have in the province of Ontario. There's a lot of concern amongst the nurses, if we take a look at RNAO and what they're saying and at some of the other nurses. In 2008, Doris Grinspun said, "The nursing community is gravely concerned about the sharp slowdown in the number of RNs working in Ontario for the past two consecutive years. To prevent a crisis, the government must act now. You see, despite the fact that the government had promised 8,000 new nurses in 2003 in their first term, in 2007 there was only an increase of 671. And of course, in 2006, there was only an increase of 643. Doris Grinspun writes that this is extremely worrisome because, of course, it has an impact on patient safety and nurse workloads. So this government needs to fulfill its commitment and, as Doris says in the last line, "To prevent a crisis, the government must act now."

Then, subsequent to that, Doris again talks about the need to deliver on the part of the government; they need to fund and open 25 additional nurse practitioner-led clinics, which were promised by the Premier. Of course, she talks about the new commitment of 9,000 that they've committed to this term; they didn't even deliver on the 6,000. She talks about guaranteeing employment for new nursing graduates, full-time. You see, that's another area where the government hasn't lived up to its obligations. I've heard from several graduates recently that they were forced to go to the United States because they were not able to get full-time employment in the province of Ontario. In fact, they weren't able to get permanent employment; they were able to get only about seven and a half months. When you have bills to pay and tuition to pay back, that just doesn't meet the needs of the new graduates. We have to make sure that we continue to invest, keep nurses in the province of Ontario when we've trained them, and we need to continue to attract additional people into that profession. We need to do a better job than what we're doing.

Recently, a woman by the name of Grace Harper, who is very concerned about the nursing shortage and who has written me on several occasions, has gotten together with a group of individuals, and she's talked about her

concern. She says, "Did you know the average age of an RN is 45.6 years, 54% are 45 years and older.... The average age of retirement is 56...."

So, you see, the Wellington-Waterloo report refers to a retirement age of 65, but the statistics, according to the College of Nurses, indicate the nurses are retiring at age 56. She goes on to say that by 2008, one third of the nursing workforce will be eligible to retire. This is all according to the College of Nurses statistics. We have a huge, huge problem if we're going to ensure that we have the nurses who are going to be required to do what is necessary for patients.

She also talks about the Liberal mandate of 2003 to hire 8,000 nurses, and now the new promise to hire 9,000. Then she talks about how they broke the first promise of 8,000 and, again, she says, "According to the stats, they hired 3,480 the first year." Again, there is concern.

She also expresses concern about the fact that the 70% full-time that the government promised has not been achieved. She goes on to state that her group is concerned that emergency rooms are being closed, and we know that. Operating rooms are closed, beds are being closed, because there are not the nurses to care for the patients. We're hearing that in the long-term-care homes as well: their inability to find nurse practitioners, their inability to find nurses, their inability to find family doctors who are going to meet the needs of the residents. In fact, I know of at least one home now that, because they couldn't find a family doctor, is taking these older people into the emergency room of the local hospital in order that they can receive care.

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Grace goes on to say that we need to create a stable supply of nurses, we need to have the retainment and recruitment strategies, we need to expand nursing education programs and enrolment. She says that we need to enhance data collection to improve human resource planning. We need to analyze health trends to match with the required number of nurses. And she warns us that the increase is going to be huge because of the aging baby boomers and the increasing level of critical illness in the population.

They have now met with the RNAO, and they've met with the ONA—they recently met with the Chief Nursing Officer of Ontario—because they urgently want this government to make some strategic changes to address and solve the nursing shortage. Here you have the grassroots up in Listowel area not seeing any action, being concerned about patients and wanting the government to do what we are certainly recommending; that is, implement a comprehensive, long-term physician recruitment strategy and an independent human resource planning body for health care professionals.

There's a high level of concern, not just among patients but among people in the professions. In fact, we hear from doctors and nurses who are concerned about retiring, because there is going to be nobody left to look after their patients. I recently met with a doctor from eastern Ontario who was in his 80s, and so was his wife,

but they didn't feel they can retire because there would be no one to take over and be the doctor in that little community. These are some of the situations we are facing in the province of Ontario.

I think that something we could do—we need to address the shortage, but maybe we need to do something else and be a little more creative and little bit more innovative, particularly when it comes to nurses. We know there is an impending shortage of nurses, and we know it's going to become more severe, and we know that that applies to all the other health personnel as well. But everything we do today is based on how we are currently utilizing those health professionals. Maybe it's time that we take a look at how we can redesign the work they do and the work environment to maximize the intellectual capital of some of those people, nurses in particular. Maybe we can provide a similar or greater level of care to patients with fewer professional personnel if we redesign our work processes. Maybe we need to take a look at creating a competitive, innovative fund that could take a look at how we can better utilize the people in the profession today and redesign the work and the work environment.

Currently, nursing time is wasted by inefficient business processes and workarounds, resulting in direct time with patients being only about 19.3% of the nurse's time. We need to take a look at other models, not just focusing entirely on increasing the numbers but on how they work, and take a look at the redesign and the work environment. That is the nursing shortage.

I'd like to compare what we did to what this government is doing. They have never had a plan. They've simply said, "We're going to create 8,000 more positions in our first term," which they failed to fulfill. Now it's 9,000, which they'll probably fail to fulfill again. We had, and recognized, a nursing shortage. When we were asked by the nursing profession, we set up a nursing task force in September 1998, and in January 1999, four or five months later, the task force presented their report to me. The task force provided eight recommendations to improve nursing services in Ontario.

The task force's number one recommendation was a permanent annual investment of \$375 million to create 10,000 new front-line and permanent nursing positions. I am very proud to say that our government accepted all of these recommendations and we immediately announced an increase in funding for new nursing positions to approximately \$484 million in the fiscal 2000-01. In March 1999, our government announced that its investment would support the creation of 12,000 new, permanent nursing positions, and that was 2,000 more than the task force had recommended. Other recommendations made by this task force, which included nurses, included providing ongoing education opportunities, human resource planning for nurses and an aggressive recruitment and retention strategy to attract students and nurses who had left the profession in Ontario.

The reality is that there were approximately 8,555 additional full-time equivalents created from the fiscal 1998-99 to December 2000. Also, according to the

College of Nurses of Ontario, in 2000, there was a higher percentage of nurses employed in nursing in Ontario than in any of the previous 10 years. Again, we did move forward on all of the recommendations and we did make a difference. That stands in stark contrast to this government, which makes promises and then breaks them and can't fulfill them. We need to have a human resource plan.

In fact, this government, after announcing 8,000 new nursing positions in 2003, spent \$91 million in January 2005 eliminating 757 nursing positions. We've heard over the summer that there are more cuts that we can expect. There have been various reports about nursing positions being slashed or positions not filled at the Rouge Valley Health System, the Leamington District Memorial Hospital, the West Nipissing General Hospital, Toronto East General and St. Joseph's Healthcare in Hamilton. This is of concern to people in the province of Ontario, obviously, that they would be losing access to these very valued and critical members of the health care team.

So I urge the government today to develop a long-term plan to hire the nurses that you've promised and to increase the number of RNs working full-time to 70%. You're on the record as saying the province should try to improve working conditions for nurses and other health care professionals; I would ask you to do exactly that. Because if we are to provide a continuity of care to patients, improve health outcomes for patients and improve job satisfaction for health care professionals, we need to achieve these nursing targets.

I want to just go back and take a look at the doctor shortage, because again, I believe that our government was able to demonstrate that we were capable of taking action and addressing the needs that became abundantly clear. We took the following steps: We did increase the number of Ontario medical school spaces by 30%. We did expand the new northern family medicine residency programs by increasing the number of entry training positions by 25%. We did announce the first new medical school in 30 years, the Northern Ontario School of Medicine. We did provide free tuition and incentives to those willing to practise in underserved areas and in primary care family practices. And, by the way, we did do that for nurses as well, and the government conveniently did away with that.

But we did listen, because in 1999, we did have a committee that took a look at the whole issue of physician supply. We recognized that the physician work-force was aging. We recognized that the 10% reduction in medical school enrolment was having a very negative impact. We also recognized that Ontario's population was not only getting larger, but was aging. So the committee took a look at how we could respond to the current and future needs.

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Dr. McKendry did the first report. He was a teacher at the Ottawa Hospital. It was a fact-finding mission. We

wanted to find out what was the scope and nature of our physician supply, our mix and our distribution.

Subsequent to that information, we set up an expert panel under Dr. Peter George, the president and vice-chancellor of McMaster University, in order to undertake longer-term planning for Ontario's physician workforce.

So again, we had recommendations, and I've told you about some of the recommendations and what we were able to identify. The government has actually had the benefit of those recommendations reflected in some of the changes that took place.

But the government is overlooking the fact that according to CPSO's 2006 annual survey, the profession is aging. They're working less than full-time—this is the doctors. More doctors are retiring and they're working less, so the number of patients without a family doctor is increasing. Older patients are increasingly being forced to go to emergency rooms—crowded emergency rooms, I would say to you—where they are left to seek treatment because they don't have a doctor, or to a walk-in clinic. They don't have the professional health care that they require as they age.

In addition, and this is a new factor that needs to be considered and addressed, these older patients require treatment for chronic diseases. Increasingly, as we have more older people, the number with chronic diseases is increasing, and they do not have regular, ongoing care or management of their chronic disease from a physician who can track their progress. That's another reason for making sure that we have a long-term strategy.

We don't have a body today, or a process, dedicated to assessing societal health needs, we don't have a body to develop the physician or health workforce plans to meet those needs, and we need to have the capacity to plan and manage our health workforce. We need to do that now, because I think everything indicates, and I've certainly tried to point out, that the situation is only going to get worse.

We also have to bite the bullet and recognize that we need technology. This government, in the course of five years, has not been able to put in place that technology to provide to our health providers and to patients. They've been totally missing in action. We need to establish a permanent, independent office of health workforce policy and planning to monitor and anticipate health care needs and determine the most appropriate mix, supply and distribution of professional skills and services to meet those needs. That office should work with the Ministry of Health to develop a model for projecting and monitoring the effective supply of health care professionals in the province.

We haven't seen that, and it is having a very serious consequence on our health care situation as we continue to see the government now threatening to perhaps close emergency rooms in some of our hospitals throughout the province of Ontario. We hear about maternal care leaving community hospitals. I think we're going to see hospitals closing in the future. I don't think people are going to be able to count on hospitals continuing to be open in their

communities. I think they are going to be losing some of their services. They are moving to larger hospitals, and I think the public needs to be alert to that fact. If we don't have the human health professionals that we need, we are increasingly going to see a closure of emergency rooms and other services moving out of communities, and people are going to be forced to travel more and more than they are today. We certainly hear of that happening, as we continue to hear about the wait times in emergency rooms and some of the other situations that are related to the deterioration of our health care system.

I guess all of this is a result of the fact that this government has no plan for health care. They have made promises but we have never seen a comprehensive plan. I don't know if you know this or not, Madam Speaker, but the Liberals did in fact make a commitment to develop and publish a 10-year strategic plan for health care. They made that commitment under the Local Health System Integration Act, 2006. In a 2007 ministry press release, the McGuinty Liberals promised this report would set out a vision, priorities and strategic directions for a health care system over the next 10 years.

So far, the government has broken, once again, another health care promise to the people in Ontario. They are unable to produce a plan to address the very serious gaps in the health system. Whether it's improving access to care for patients, whether it's modernizing our health infrastructure, whether it's shortening wait times or promoting good health—and we need to continue to focus on good health promotion—Ontario requires a long-term vision, a vision this government has failed to produce.

When the other Minister of Health was confronted during the Standing Committee on Estimates this year, he responded to the question as to why he hasn't done this: "It's true to say, and I have to take the responsibility that we haven't hit our marks on this." He acknowledged they didn't have the strategic plan ready.

We continue to throw money at the system, we continue to make all these knee-jerk responses to situations, but we don't have a strategic plan. So how will we ever know if we're meeting the needs of our population? How will we ever know if the money that we're spending is achieving improved patient outcomes? We simply don't know because we don't have a strategic plan.

The former minister suggested that the report would be published some time in 2008. However, when we asked the ministry officials to specify a date, they couldn't do so—again, another promise and another broken promise. In fact, the former minister's exact words were, "I think that the difficulty that we were in"—why they didn't have it ready before—"was that the window last year got too close to the election."

If they couldn't develop the strategic plan last year in 2007 despite their promise, in order that we would have better health care planning, they've had a year since the election to get their act together and develop a strategic plan.

The ministry and the minister have continued to say on several occasions, "We're going to have a plan. We're

going to release a plan." In June 2006, the Minister of Health sent a letter to all the chairs and CEOs of the Ontario LHINs saying, "Our government is in the process of developing a 10-year health system strategic plan to be made public next spring," meaning 2007. In December of that year, the minister told members in the Legislature that he would develop the 10-year plan over the coming months with an expected release date in spring of 2007.

Well, here we are. It's the fall of 2008, almost two years later, and we still have no plan. I would say to you, it's actually hindering the ability of the LHINs to move forward, because they have no idea what the strategic plan is for the health system over the next 10 years. If you don't have a plan, you can't meet the needs of the people in this province. It's time that this minister, hopefully, will come forward and not delay any longer in bringing forward a plan.

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Today this government is spending 46 cents of every dollar on health. Even without a plan, spending on health care is projected to rise to \$42.4 billion next year. Today we have a situation where people are operating in the dark. Health care providers are doing the best they can without a clear sense of direction. People in this province deserve better. They need to know where the government intends to go. They need to know what plan is in place to address the needs of the critical shortage of health professionals. They need to know how hospitals are going to be able to address the deficits. There are many things they need to know—and they don't.

They deserve to know how the challenges of the rising costs are going to be met. You can't continue to have that health budget go up every year. Currently, we don't even know if those increases are improving patient outcomes. How are we going to address the needs of that increasingly older population? How are we going to respond to overcrowded emergency departments? How are we going to respond to the need for more long-term-care beds? Because we've got a serious problem in many communities. The letters continue to flock in, and of course we hear from the stressed workers in long-term-care facilities that they simply can't respond to the needs of the increasing frail population in the long-term-care homes.

This government has no plan. They have operated without a plan since 2003, and probably that is why when the research is done and the respondents answer, they see the situation worsening since 2003. That is despite the fact that this government introduced a health tax. This government promised in 2003 that they wouldn't increase our taxes. Well, in the very first budget they introduced a health tax. They said it was absolutely necessary. You and I know that that just goes into general revenues. And there are people in this province now who, despite the government's promise not to increase taxes, are paying somewhere in the neighbourhood of 900 additional dollars per year. We know that the health tax also unfairly forces lower-income people to pay more proportionately.

We have a government that moves from crisis to crisis, if they move at all. Over the course of the summer, this government has largely been missing in action. We've had long-term-care problems. We've had physician shortage problems. We've had the outbreak of listeriosis. This government seems to think that if they don't speak, if they don't utter a word, if they just are not there, the situation will go away.

Look at C. difficile. If you take a look at how other governments across Canada and around the world handled C. difficile and you take a look at this government, which preferred to bury its head in the sand, and didn't want to undertake and to do an inquiry or any sort of investigation to find out what happened, why did it happen and how could we ensure that it didn't happen in the future—there's just no attempt. There's no attempt to respond to issues with a comprehensive plan. It's simply knee-jerk reaction. And now what is the government going to do this week? They're going to release the number of people that have C. difficile, but only if it's over 10. That information isn't going to give us the answers we need. We know that C. difficile continues to be prevalent in our hospitals—it's in our long-term-care homes—and this government is still not tackling the root cause of the problem and doing everything it can to make sure that people don't die in the future or that outbreaks are contained. They don't want to know, because I think they're afraid of what they're going to find, and maybe they're going to be found negligent because they didn't seriously respond to the situation in the first place, unlike other governments in Canada and other governments throughout the world. It's easier just to pretend it didn't happen and put up a wall and say, "We're now going to release the numbers." Well, the numbers aren't much good without knowing how it happened, why it happened and what we are going to do to make sure it never happens again.

We've had lots of letters from the families of loved ones who have passed away. They can't comprehend why this government isn't prepared to undertake an investigation of what happened and why it happened—an inquiry—and also to develop a plan of action. This government just isn't capable, and hasn't been capable since 2003, of looking at any issue and being prepared to acknowledge that there's a serious problem, and then to embark on and undertake a comprehensive plan of action. So I urge this new Minister of Health to adopt a different tack and recognize that people in this province deserve better, and take a look at the solutions. We've brought forward some solutions today. For example, if you're going to address the shortage of health care professionals, establish an independent human resource planning body for health care professionals, implement a comprehensive long-term physician recruitment strategy, create a new school of medicine in order that our young people can receive their education here and aren't forced to go out of the province and pay for their own schooling and then come back here. We need doctors. Let's train the doctors here.

We currently have a two-tier system. Yes, there are some people who can afford to go out of the province, but there are many others who simply couldn't afford to do so. We know that we need the doctors. Let's create that new school of medicine. And let's remember that the situation is growing more dire every day, and it is absolutely necessary that this government develop the strategic plan they have promised. I will tell you right now that the LHINs are operating as 14 independent bodies with their different priorities. In fact, they're starting to look outside the province, to the United States, for some best practices. So we now have almost 14 mini-ministries of health doing their own thing, and that's because you have not developed that 10-year strategic plan that would give guidance and vision and help all the health professionals in this province know what needs to be done and where you plan to go, and that ensures, at the end of the day, that we're going to be able to meet the needs of the Ontario population, recognizing that that population is aging and that their needs are going to be increasing. We need to address the issues of emergency room overcrowding and the shortage of health professionals, and we certainly need to put more focus on health prevention and health promotion.

The problems are huge. I urge this minister: You have an opportunity to put a new stamp on the Ministry of Health. You have the opportunity to articulate a vision and a plan, and you have the opportunity to ensure that we in the opposition, and people throughout the province of Ontario, work with you in order that, collectively, we can address the needs of our population.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was very interesting to listen to the comments from my colleague from Kitchener-Waterloo going through some of what this bill will do and what it won't do. It was most interesting to listen to some of the statistics for health care professional shortages specific to her riding. When I heard 588 registered nurses, 511 personal support workers and 264 licensed practical nurses for the riding of Kitchener-Waterloo, I would say these are the kinds of statistics that are also very real in my riding.

We all recognize that although Bill 97, An Act to increase access to qualified health professionals for all Ontarians by amending the Regulated Health Professions Act, talks about all health professionals, when you look at it, it is very focused on physicians. We all agree that between half a million and, as my colleague said, a million Ontarians do not have access to family physicians. We also realize that there is a shortage of other health care professionals. She described it in her riding, but I would say it is even worse in my riding and in most of northern Ontario, my riding being in northeastern Ontario.

We support that we need a plan to better manage health care human resources in this province so that we have the right mix and the right distribution throughout

Ontario. We also support the honourable member from Kitchener-Waterloo's stance that more needs to be done in health promotion and disease prevention.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: The member for Waterloo started off this morning's debate with some unfortunate language, but perhaps the extremely negative approach to this morning's debate is rooted in the fact that when the members opposite had the opportunity to take steps with respect to this file, they did not do so. They were unable to or, perhaps worse, they were unwilling to do so.

Bill 97 and the proposed amendments to the RHPA recognize the health regulatory colleges as key partners in ensuring that Ontarians have access to an adequate number of health care providers to meet their health care needs. The health colleges will now have to consider this duty in all aspects of their work as health profession regulators, in particular when setting the requirements for entry to the professions, and the important role that the registration requirements play in governing access to the profession is something that the member, as a former Minister of Health, should know and understand.

There are approximately 5,000 Canadians, for example, who are currently practising in the US, and our government has heard from many of these physicians that they would like to return. The recent announcement and the work that we have done with the CPSO over the summer, arising with the most recent announcement, will pave the way for those physicians who wish to return to the province.

Over the summer, we also made significant progress when it comes to access to health care providers. The newly negotiated OMA agreement creates another unprecedented partnership between the government and the medical association that will ensure that 500,000 unattached patients will be connected to a primary care provider by 2011. We've worked hard over the summer to deliver on these important commitments that are part of our desire to provide adequate health care, and we will continue to do so.

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to congratulate the new Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on his new responsibilities.

I would like to provide the minister with some information and draw his attention to York region as an area that I will be discussing with the minister in some detail over the coming months, but I want to point out to him that my riding of Newmarket-Aurora is within one of the fastest-growing regions in the province of Ontario, and over the next three years will account for some 18% of the annual population growth in this province alone. That means that each year, our hospitals in York region and other health care services will have to provide treatment to, on average, about 30,000 more people every year. That means that the current situation of underfunding of our hospitals and all health care services is a major, major concern. I would ask the minister, as we look at this legislation, which is long overdue—that, as the member from Kitchener-Waterloo so eloquently put

it, is but scratching the surface of what really needs to be done.

What we're looking for is a comprehensive plan, as my colleague indicated, that not only with regard to the doctor shortage but the shortages of specialists and other health care services, not only in York region but across the province, is adequately addressed.

"I'm told that I have cancer," I was told by a constituent this past week, "but it looks as though I'll have to wait at least eight weeks to see a specialist." I hear comments like this almost every day. It's up to this new minister to take on his responsibility to ensure that health care services are adequately planned for in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I want to talk about Dr. M., a gentleman who lives in my riding who was trained as a surgeon in Iran. He is now working as a baker. He earns \$9 an hour, and in fact Dr. M. took part in our \$10-an-hour campaign. Dr. M., now five years after McGuinty was elected, still works as a baker in Parkdale-High Park and still makes under \$10 an hour, except that now the only difference is that he travels back to Iran for six months of the year to work as a surgeon. Why, we must ask? Because it would take him, he was told, 10 years to become accredited in Ontario.

Our hope—not just my hope, but our hope across Ontario—is that finally, Dr. M. gets to practise surgery in the province of Ontario and doesn't have to work as a baker anymore. The question before us is, will this thin little bill, this one-page bill, make a real difference in the life of Dr. M.? I wait with bated breath. I'm enthusiastic. Let's hope it does. I'll certainly be following it very closely and I'll certainly report back to the House in six months to see if Bill 97 allows Dr. M. finally to get the accreditation he needs. Because we know that recent immigrants don't have the money to put themselves back through 10 years of training. There needs to be a graduated system and they need to be earning in the health care system while they become accredited. If this bill does the trick, I'm all for it. Somehow I doubt it. I've been waiting five years, as has everyone else in Ontario, particularly those foreign-trained medical professionals to be able to practise their craft.

So again, we look forward to this as a mini step forward where a mile step forward is required. Mostly, I want to see Dr. M. working in surgery.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Response? The member for Kitchener-Waterloo.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I thank the members for Nickel Belt, Newmarket-Aurora, Parkdale-High Park and Etobicoke-Lakeshore. I think everybody acknowledges that this is but a tiny step forward and certainly it is important that the colleges do what they can. However, at the end of the day, the province needs to be the one in control. It is the province that needs to develop a comprehensive plan of action—a strategic health plan, a

10-year plan, a plan that they promised to us and have failed to deliver. Because until that time, we're not going to be able to identify what our needs are and how we can best address them.

Despite what the government says about all of these IMGs getting access to practising in the province of Ontario, I received an email from a Dr. Singh writing on behalf of a group of international medical graduates—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Can I ask the members to please respect the member who is responding to the questions and comments and to take your seats, please?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I guess I'll get my time back.

The pain that they're going through and how misguided—he says here, "[The] government feels that we are superhumans who can do all the work ... like working in a factory, [and] then do volunteer work in some hospital, then read ... the challenges of a new country too...." He says that when a doctor comes to Canada, it appears they have four paths. If they're superhuman, they will work as a doctor in Canada; secondly, they can go to the States and work there, because there are more residency spots and they are easily accepted; third is to drive a taxi or work in a factory—and, by the way, that is what most of them do; or they can fly back to their native country.

This government needs to do more for our foreign-trained doctors.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. Before I call for further debate, can I just ask the members—I know everybody is excited for the first question period after the break, but we do have further debate happening here before we get into question period.

The member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Actually, given that that would be my one-hour lead on this topic, I was wondering if I could start tomorrow.

Mr. Mike Colle: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I wonder if I can move that we recess until 10:45.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Is it the pleasure of the House that that carries? Is there unanimous consent on that, then? Thank you.

Second reading debate adjourned.

The House recessed from 1041 to 1045.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, to welcome the grade 12 Canadian and world politics class and their teacher, Jen McCreary, from Bracebridge and Muskoka Lakes Secondary School. I trust that everyone had a fine summer.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Welcome to everyone back for another session. I welcome the Premier back from his missing-in-action summer holiday. We hope that he's rested up and finally ready to notice that Ontario's economy is in serious trouble, and that a lot of the blame falls squarely on his government's policies. Ontario's economy has effectively flatlined; almost 43,000 jobs lost in June and July alone. People right across the province are worried about their future, their kids' future, their savings. They want meaningful and effective action, not more of the blame game stunts.

Premier, will you immediately bring in an economic update that will provide tax relief to struggling families and businesses, and jump-start our economy?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's good to be back. I'm delighted to take the question and I look forward to engaging my colleagues on all sides of the House in an important debate about what we should be doing for the strength of this economy.

I will admit that there is a real anxiety in our province when it comes to our economic state at present and our future, but with that anxiety I think there's also an understanding that I'd ask my colleague opposite to acknowledge, that there are some powerful global economic forces at play that are having an impact on us not only here in Ontario but throughout North America and the world. I read this morning in one paper that the US is contemplating a \$700-billion bailout for the financial industry there. That's going to affect the confidence of the US purchaser and that's going to have an impact on our economy. So I'd ask my friend to acknowledge that there are some forces at play that are having an impact on the Ontario economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: No one denies that there are external factors that the Premier and his government cannot really deal with, but there are things he can do at the provincial level. But he has been effectively in denial about the failure of his own government's economic strategies. Several months ago a number of groups, including OPSEU, called for an economic summit to deal with a deteriorating economy, but the Premier clearly preferred to stay at the cottage, apparently oblivious to the almost daily job loss figures falling down around his ears.

Premier, when will you accept the clear evidence that your economic policies are failing Ontario? Start following the advice of independent and objective experts and immediately reduce taxes on the kinds of investments that preserve and bring good jobs, jobs that we need right now today.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate that we've come to the nub of it so quickly. They want us to cut taxes and they want us to cut taxes in dramatic fashion. The last

time I calculated the total tax cut that they were looking for, it was \$5 billion. That's a one-point plan: They want us to cut taxes by \$5 billion. They're not prepared to admit that that would compromise the quality of our schools, the quality of our health care and the quality of our protections for public safety, like the safety of our water, for example. We have a five-point plan. We're cutting taxes to the tune of \$3 billion over the course of four years. We're also investing in the skills and education of our people; we believe in retraining our workers who've lost their jobs. We're investing in infrastructure and innovation, and in partnerships with business. That's a comprehensive, thoughtful approach to growing this economy. We reject the notion that the only thing we need to do is cut business taxes by \$5 billion.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: You listen to the Premier and it makes you wonder if he was not only on holidays but in cryonic suspension over the summer and didn't catch any of the news. It's not just people in the official opposition; it's experts that you rely upon. When he wouldn't hold a summit, the official opposition did, and the Bank of Nova Scotia told us that Ontario is the only province that will have zero economic growth this year. One of your key economic advisers, Dr. Roger Martin, told us that Ontario's tax rates on investment are among the highest in the world, and "We have one of the dumbest tax structures on the face of the planet." Premier, if you want to ignore us, okay. But why aren't you listening to advice from the best and brightest? Why are you turning your back on steps that could turn Ontario's economy around?

1050

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My friend doesn't like to acknowledge that we're cutting business taxes by \$3 billion over a four-year time frame.

I took the opportunity this morning to deliver a speech—I want to reach as many Ontarians as I possibly can. I want them to understand that if we were treated fairly by the federal government, then we could keep more of our own money—

Interjections.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know my colleague opposite understands that we send \$20 billion to Ottawa for distribution to the rest of country. If we could keep more of our own money, then we could cut more taxes, then we could invest further in the skills and education of our workers, we could benefit more innovation, infrastructure and partnerships with Ontario business. It's time now for all Ontarians, but especially members opposite, to stand up for Ontario.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Minister of Finance. Let me first say, though, that it's a relief to see the Premier here today, having apparently escaped from the kidnappers who held him hostage all summer long.

To the Minister of Finance: Six months ago, you tabled a budget projecting Ontario's economic growth for the year to be 1.1%. More recently, as of September 10, the Bank of Nova Scotia predicted that Ontario will see a 0% economic growth rate this year. According to your own budget figures, this will result in an \$800-million loss in provincial revenues. Can you rise and inform the House how much below projections revenues in the province are as of today?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The budget laid out a number of assumptions. As per the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, which that member voted against, we table those numbers as they become available. The first-quarter financial numbers show that we continue to track the numbers that were laid out in the budget.

We consult all those economists, including Scotiabank and others, around the numbers that go in. Obviously there have been downward revisions in their numbers. Some numbers are not performing as well as we projected in the budget; others are actually performing better, including employment growth.

When the second-quarter numbers are available, they will be tabled, according to the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, and we will do a fall statement at the appropriate time.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The problem is that the minister's major assumptions are wrong. He's way off on our growth rate. Six months later, he is off on sales taxes, and his US economic growth rate is also wrong, trending below his projections, which could mean another \$150-million minimum loss in revenue to the province. Minister, that's almost \$1 billion in revenue below your projections, and I remind you that we're now about six months into the fiscal year.

I ask you to stand up in the assembly today and let the members here and the taxpayers of Ontario know how big the hole is in Dalton McGuinty's budget.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member opposite fails to mention that retail sales are up from budget projections, interest rates are lower and wages and salaries are actually up, in spite of challenges in parts of our economy, and those have an impact on numbers as well.

We are still collecting second-quarter financial numbers. As Toronto-Dominion Bank's economics unit recommended, if there is a need for adjustment at the time of the fall statement, that's the appropriate time to do it. When those numbers become available, we will table them in this House and we'll have a full and frank discussion about all the challenges in the economy. But to repeat what the Premier said, this government has a five-point plan that's responding to the challenges in this economy. It's better than the one-trick pony of tax cuts we see over there, which aren't going to solve all the problems for all the people.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I've already outlined two of his indicators that show about a \$1-billion hole in his budget six months into the fiscal year. Minister, I understand it's

hard to tell the 800 families who face job losses at John Deere in Welland that there is even bad news that the government is sitting upon, yet to release. I know it's difficult to tell people in Windsor, in your own community, who lost jobs in the auto, auto parts or hospitality sectors, that there is bad news on the horizon when it comes to revenues and your ability to keep your own promises.

But Ontarians have a remarkable capacity to deal with tough times if they have a government willing to tell them the facts. They want a Premier who's on the job, not on a long, luxurious summer vacation. Minister, I'll ask you one more time: Will you immediately table an economic statement and tell the people of Ontario the truth about your finances?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: There are challenges in the economy, and our five-point plan addresses them. The member forgot to mention that employment was actually up 14,000 in the month of August, up 50,000 since December, that wages are 4.6% ahead of where they were and retail sales are up.

This government has a plan. I can tell the member what my constituents don't want to hear. They don't want to be told time and again that they get \$4,000 a year less in employment insurance benefits than an Albertan. My unemployed constituents, the unemployed constituents—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: The minister may want to clarify that unemployment insurance across Canada—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's not a point of order. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Unemployed people in Windsor, at John Deere and elsewhere don't want to be told that we should give another tax cut to big oil companies. They want a comprehensive plan that deals with skills training, that invests in infrastructure—\$9 billion this year. That's the right plan. The numbers are mixed, but this government's plan is working. We'll continue to pursue the balanced policy mix that we have to date.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Premier. When it comes to sustaining jobs, the McGuinty government ship is fast taking on water. Last week, we were treated to a reshuffling of the deck chairs on the McGuinty government sinking jobs ship. One of the deck chairs has a new name on it, but it's already taking on water. My question is this: How many jobs does the Premier expect will be created by his not-so-new Minister of International Trade?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to congratulate Ms. Pupatello on her new appointment. I want to thank her on behalf of Ontarians for the work that she's done. I also want to acknowledge that we need to do more. That was one of the reasons for the modest reorganization of our government, to split that responsibility into two, so we have now a minister responsible for economic develop-

ment and a minister responsible for international trade and investment.

To answer the question directly, we want as many jobs as we can get our hands on. We want to assert ourselves in a global economy. I want the minister to be doing as much travel as possible. We know that there are real opportunities out there. But it brings me back to something I said a little bit earlier. If we could keep a little bit more of our own money, stop sending \$20 billion to the rest of the country, we could do a lot—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier. Supplementary.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I notice the Premier studiously tries to avoid answering the question. But here is the puzzle: This year alone, the not-so-new Minister of International Trade has already been to India, China, Mexico, Belgium, France, the UK and Italy, to name just a few. Here is the tally, and it almost reads like that MasterCard commercial: ribbon cuttings, at least three; jobs created in Ontario, not many; the value to the 230,000 Ontario workers who have lost their jobs, worthless.

Given this track record, will the Premier admit that his not-so-new Minister of International Trade is nothing more than a diversion from the McGuinty government's sorry record of failing to sustain manufacturing jobs—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think that the list of the countries that the minister has visited speaks to her work ethic and her devotion to her responsibilities. It takes a lot of work and it takes return visits. It takes applying yourself to the development of long-term relationships in order to land the kinds of major successes that we will land here in the province of Ontario.

1100

I understand the frustration felt by families who are caught up in these economic forces which are absolutely beyond their control. But we do have some control. That's one of the reasons why we have this minister with new responsibilities. That's why we continue to invest in job retraining opportunities for folks who have lost their jobs. That's why we continue to invest in tax reductions. That's why we continue to invest in infrastructure, so that we can create jobs in the short term and enhance our productivity in the long term.

But I say again, if we could just keep a bit more of that \$20 billion—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier. Final supplementary.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Once again I note the Premier's studied effort to avoid answering the question.

Premier, if you go one province to the west, Manitoba is a manufacturing province. They're not losing manufacturing jobs; they're gaining manufacturing jobs. Just over the last few weeks, Quebec is gaining manufacturing jobs, manufacturing solar power equipment, manufacturing wind turbines for wind power. But the Mc-

Guinty government continues to sleep while jobs are lost in Ontario.

New Democrats have laid out a real jobs program for you. Bring in a buy-Ontario strategy such as we see in the United States in terms of transit equipment. Bring in a refundable manufacturing investment tax credit. Bring in reasonable industrial hydro rates. You don't need to send a minister around the world tallying up more frequent flyer points; you need to get serious about—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My friend may not be prepared to recognize this, but I think Ontarians recognize that we are Canada's manufacturing heartland. I think they recognize as well that manufacturing in North America today is really, really tough going.

I think they also acknowledge that during the course of the past 50 years we have been honoured to provide support to other provinces around the country and help them build up the quality of their public services and further strengthen their economies. But we're saying that if we want to continue to play that role during the upcoming 50 years, then at this point in time we should be allowed to keep a bit more of that \$20 billion that we keep sending to them. We could further cut our taxes. We could put in place further manufacturing strategies. We could do more to retrain folks who have lost their jobs. We could invest in infrastructure and innovation like never before if we could just strengthen this province so that we could in turn strengthen our country.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton: Again to the Premier: The Premier seems to already want to engage in the blame game: Blame someone else. But I say to the Premier, rather than jet-setting your not-so-new minister to foreign locales, I would encourage the Premier and his not-so-new minister to spend some time in communities across the province, communities like Welland, because Welland lost more than 1,000 jobs in just one week: 800 at John Deere and 235 at GDX Automotive.

My question is this: When will the McGuinty government finally get to work sustaining good-paying manufacturing jobs in places like Welland, instead of jet-setting around the world?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Obviously, we feel for the folks in all Ontario communities which have lost jobs, and we're working as hard as we can together with them in those communities to strengthen their economic opportunities, including providing retraining opportunities for them.

My friend opposite does know as well that we've been in touch with the John Deere folks and they've told us the same thing over and over again: "Your dollar is too high. Because of that, we are not prepared to maintain that investment in Canada." We don't have control over the value of the dollar, and I think, in fairness, the federal government has limited control over the value of the

dollar, but there are other things that we can do and are doing. That's why we're investing in retraining opportunities. That's why we're prepared to partner with Ontario businesses to help them reinvest and to further strengthen their businesses so they can hire and maintain their existing workforces. That's why we're continuing to invest in infrastructure.

My friend opposite says we're not doing anything. If he checks the record, he'll see we have a five-point plan, and we'd love to accelerate that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier. Supplementary.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Premier, Manitoba is also a manufacturing province. Manitoba also has to deal with the high value of the Canadian dollar. But they're adding manufacturing jobs in the manufacturing of buses and transit vehicles, adding manufacturing jobs in the aerospace sector. So other provinces are managing this. How? A reasonable industrial hydro rate, a refundable manufacturing investment tax credit and strategies like a Buy America strategy. Ontarians are simply asking when the McGuinty government is going to implement some of these practical strategies that are working in other provinces. When is the McGuinty government going to stop blaming everyone else, anyone else, and do something practical to sustain jobs in communities like Welland?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, my honourable colleague opposite understands that our manufacturing sector is many, many times bigger than that of Manitoba. He will understand that Ontario dollars are on this very day making their way into Manitoba to help support the economy there. He will know that the federal government has in place a western economic development strategy to help Manitoba and the other western provinces. He will know as well that there is no such program in place to support southern Ontario, home to 10 million proud Canadians and home to Canada's manufacturing heartland. He knows all that stuff.

What he's not prepared to accept is that we are working hard and well with Ontarians. We're cutting business taxes, we're investing in retraining opportunities, we're investing in infrastructure, we're investing in innovation and we're partnering with Ontario business and we're going to keep working as hard as we can so that when we emerge from this global economic slowdown, we will be stronger than ever before.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: What I don't accept, Premier, is that your sole response to the loss of tens of thousands of manufacturing jobs is to create a new minister of international junkets. That's what I don't accept. What I don't accept is that while over ten thousand good-paying manufacturing jobs have been lost in the forest sector in northern Ontario, not one paper mill, one pulp mill, one sawmill, one OSB mill has closed in Manitoba. What I don't accept is that while transit jobs are being lost in

Oshawa and Windsor and Welland, transit jobs are actually being added in the province of Manitoba.

The question is this: When will the McGuinty government stop offering up PR solutions like a new minister of international junkets, stop blaming everybody else and actually get serious about sustaining manufacturing jobs, whether they are in Thunder Bay, Welland, Windsor or Oshawa? When are you going to get serious about sustaining manufacturing jobs in Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, just so my colleague is aware, since January of this year Ontario has created 60% of all new Canadian jobs. If at some point in time, he wants to stand up for our province, he can use that.

When it comes to manufacturing generally, we have, as you know, eliminated capital taxes for that sector and we did that on a retroactive basis. We're also continuing to cut the business education taxes for our manufacturers. We are continuing to invest in a small business deduction by enhancing the threshold. He'll know that we're also helping manufacturers by better supporting the capital cost allowance. He'll know about our advanced manufacturing investment strategy. He'll know about our Next Generation of Jobs Fund. In short, he knows about the billions and billions of dollars that we have devoted to strengthening manufacturing in the province of Ontario.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier. Premier, your government is denying thousands of young people apprenticeship positions in this province in high-demand trades through your artificially high apprenticeship ratios. Ontario is one of the only jurisdictions in North America where you need three qualified electricians just to train one apprentice. If your government would agree to change the ratio so that one electrician could supervise and train one apprentice, then thousands of new apprentice positions would open in the province, creating thousands of jobs.

Almost on a daily basis there are contractors who have to turn away apprentices. They cannot take them on because of the high apprentice-to-journeyman ratios and they're forced to turn them away. These young people are going to BC and Alberta, where the apprenticeship ratios are one to one—one electrician training one apprentice. You promised to look at this issue when I raised it, and my colleagues raised it before. What have you done? Will you agree today to lower the apprenticeship ratios to a one to one?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

1110

Hon. John Milloy: I want to thank the member for his question, and I want to thank the member for his interest in terms of skilled trades and apprenticeships. I'm very

proud of our government's record. In our first term in office, we were able to increase apprenticeship ratios by 25%, and we're on track to see a further increase of 25% over the course of this term.

The member raised the issue of ratios. As he knows, we look to industry for the best advice on how to set ratios. At the same time, I agree with the honourable member and I think all members agree that we need to reform our apprenticeship system. I was very pleased several days ago to announce our government's intention to move forward with a college of skilled trades, a self-regulatory body similar in nature to the College of Physicians and Surgeons or the College of Teachers, which is going to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again to the Premier: Even members of your own Liberal caucus, Premier, agree that the ratios need to be changed.

I have a letter here dated June 2, 2008, from the member from Northumberland—Quinte West sent to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities that says, and I quote, "Minister, during the annual meeting of the Ontario Electrical League, your colleague, then the Minister of Energy, the Honourable Dwight Duncan, in his address clearly indicated that a change must be made to these ratios. This is a matter that very seriously needs addressing."

Premier, this issue isn't about safety—that is one of the excuses we often get from your government—because, as I said, in Alberta and BC they have one-to-one ratios. That is Premiers Campbell and Stelmach, and surely you are not accusing them of not caring about safety. Changing the ratios will cost the government nothing. All you have to do is change the regulations: no new spending, no new programs, no new bureaucracy. Premier, why won't you do it? Or perhaps the question should be, who in the heck are you protecting and why aren't you going to the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. John Milloy: I think all people who look at the apprenticeship system can identify many areas where we need to take a fresh look, which is why we are very, very excited at moving forward with the college of skilled trades, which is going to be an opportunity for all those involved in the industry to move forward.

In the interim, we continue to work with the industry on the issue of ratios, and a variety of issues. But since the member raises the issue of electrical apprentices, I would like to share some statistics with him. New registrations in that field—we're talking about the field of electricians—have increased by 32% since 2003. Completion has increased 151% since 2003. The numbers of active apprentices have increased 20% since 2003.

As I've told this House before, we continue to work with the industry in all areas on the issue of ratios. Since 2005, we've seen changes to five areas—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question. The member from Beaches—East York.

POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. A year ago, this government promised to make poverty reduction a priority. Last week, though, the Premier told Ontarians that they have to wait longer because times are tough and getting tougher. Ontarians are losing their jobs, some of them are being evicted from their homes, and many are being forced onto welfare. More than ever, now is the time for action. How much longer does the Premier expect Ontarians to have to wait to see serious action on poverty? A year? Two years? Or is it your intention to wait until after the next election?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question and the opportunity to speak to this yet again.

I'm proud to lead the first government that is going to put forward a comprehensive and effective plan to address poverty in the province of Ontario. The issue is not whether or not we are going to put out a plan this December to address poverty; it's the rate and the pace at which we can move on implementing that plan. I have said that several times. The economy is in a state of flux. I think we should do here what families do in their homes: If financial circumstances change, then you adjust and you focus on your priorities. You make sure you keep investing in those things which are absolutely essential that you are investing in at present, and you have to be careful about taking on new responsibilities. That's what I've said in the past.

We will put in place a plan this December. The only issue is—and I look forward to debating this with my colleagues—how quickly we move forward on that plan, the first of its kind put forward by any government in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Prue: What I just heard was that we're going to have a plan, but no implementation. The Premier says this government can't move ahead with a poverty reduction plan because it is too costly, I assume, for Ontario's struggling economy. But many significant actions to reduce poverty would not have to cost the government a single penny. I'm going to give you four: This government could immediately increase the minimum wage to \$10.25 an hour; this government could strengthen employment standards so that employers can't underpay and exploit workers; this government could cap payday loan rates at 35%, so that people don't see their scant dollars siphoned off at extraordinary rates; and this government could allow and bring back card-based certification, so that workers across all sectors can do what they need to to get better jobs. Why won't this government move ahead with these anti-poverty actions that will—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the suggestions; I really do. My colleague joins 8,500 Ontarians who have

visited our “growing stronger” website. We have received over 600 thoughtful submissions. Almost 500 individual experts have engaged in our first-ever province-wide poverty consultations. As I say, we look forward to delivering on that plan in December, unlike the NDP when they were in government.

Let me tell you about some of the things we’ve been doing in the interim. We have in place a new Ontario child benefit, with monthly payments now flowing to families. It will support over one million Ontario children. We’ve raised the minimum wage several times over. We’ve raised social assistance rates several times over. We’re investing in affordable housing, a new dental program, a student nutrition program and literacy centres for parents and families. So we’re not resting. We look forward to delivering on that plan. We’ll keep working in the interim as well.

SEWAGE SPILL

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Last spring, I stood in this House to raise my community’s concern about a sewage spill that happened in the city of Ottawa in the summer of 2006, where 960,000 cubic metres of raw sewage and storm water were allowed to flow into the Ottawa River. This spill of almost one million cubic metres of sewage polluted the Ottawa River downstream and closed the beach at Petrie Island in Orléans for almost the entire summer of 2006. No one in our community knew about this spill until 2008.

I can tell you that my community is still concerned about this. Over the summer, it has been on the front pages of our local papers. When I’ve been meeting with residents at events over the summer, my constituents are asking me how this could have happened. At that time, you said your ministry was launching an investigation into this accident, and months have passed. What actions has your ministry taken?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Let me say, first of all, that all the members in the Ottawa area are very concerned about this and have been very proactive in this regard. The ministry has conducted its investigation, and charges were laid against the city of Ottawa. They’re before the courts right now, so I can’t make any further comments on that. We’ve also been working with the city of Ottawa to make sure, first of all, that immediate action is taken by them every time there is a combined sewer overflow; for example, by looking at the regulator gates after every rainstorm. I understand that additional monitoring equipment has been installed.

We are working with them on an ongoing basis to make sure that these kinds of situations will not happen. They’ve put in place much better reporting mechanisms to both the ministry and the way they look after it themselves to make sure that this kind of thing will not happen in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary, the member from Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: This started out as a concern about a specific incident: concern about the fact that a sewer gate jammed open, letting sewage pour into our river, which was undetected for two weeks; concern about the fact that when it was detected, the community wasn’t informed in spite of repeated closures of Petrie Island beach. But more than that, it brought to light a greater problem. We learned that this is a long-standing problem, not an isolated incident. It has been happening since long before our government came to office.

The Ottawa River runs through the heart of the community, but that river is being contaminated with sewage. Westboro beach in my riding alone was closed for 21 days this summer. With these heavy rains, our combined sewer system can’t take the capacity and raw sewage is released into our river. This is unacceptable. Minister, what actions are being taken to correct this situation?

Hon. John Gerretsen: The largest action we are taking is as a result of the announcement the Premier made at the AMO conference, where over \$1.1 billion of new infrastructure funding is going out across this province, including \$77 million to the city of Ottawa.

As the Premier stated at that point in time, they obviously want the money to be used for those priority infrastructure projects that the city itself has to determine. But I can tell you that, from everything we’ve heard about the situation, this should be one of their prime priorities and I’m sure that \$77 million that the city of Ottawa receives in order to upgrade the infrastructure will be used for projects like this.

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ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the new Minister of Economic Development. You have inherited a critical portfolio at a time when the economy in Ontario is in serious trouble. Minister, I hope that you are up to the job and to the challenge, to the benefit of the citizens of Ontario.

At the recent PC caucus economic round table, all the experts said the same thing: Lower taxes and reduce regulation. These were non-partisan voices from business, from labour, from academia, from people who are worried about the direction that the Ontario economy is headed in.

Minister, will you heed the advice of these experts? Will you commit today to lowering taxes and reducing regulations for new business investments in Ontario so that Ontario can cease becoming the caboose of the Canadian economy and once again become the economic engine of this country?

Hon. Michael Bryant: Thank you, I say to the member, for your non-partisan good wishes—or not so good, as the case may be.

I also add my congratulations to the new minister of the new Ministry of International Trade and Investment, as Minister Papatello goes around the world to get the jobs and investments and bring them to Ontario, contrary to the approach of the leader of the third party.

We obviously welcome all advice, and the short answer to the member's question is yes, and we have, and will continue to do so. The commitment to help and not hinder is one that the Premier has made in terms of addressing the regulatory burden. In terms of the tax relief, as has already been said, billions of dollars of very strategic tax relief has already been put into place—more on that in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Minister, the fact is that these are very small, late-in-the-day changes to taxes. They have been made some time ago. The situation has changed drastically in the last six months, so those very small tax cuts that your government implemented were put in place in our economy. We need some long-term policies. We need some up-to-date policies. We need some competitive tax structures in this province. We need to streamline some regulations and minimize the government impact on businesses that move into this province. These are things that have to be changed now and the sooner they get changed, the sooner their impact will take effect on our economy, Mr. Minister.

I ask you again: Will you take some immediate action? Will you reduce taxes and regulations and move this province forward once again?

Hon. Michael Bryant: Again, as was recently said by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, "We must acknowledge the tax relief that has been delivered over the past few years by the Ontario government." But that's not the only approach taken by this government; that's the only approach taken by that party. We also intervene to make investments through, for example, the manufacturing investment strategy. That was brought to the member's own community in Halton. That's why the province was able to provide a \$10-million loan to the Roxul Inc., and that meant hundreds of jobs retained or created for the member's own community. That's this government's approach. Yes, tax relief; yes, addressing the regulatory burden; but also making those investments and interventions to provide more productivity, more innovation and more investment in infrastructure, and we'll keep on doing it.

JURY SELECTION

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Attorney General. After it was revealed that of the 12,111 people on the jury list for the judicial district of Kenora only 44 were First Nations, the Attorney General claimed that he has made "determined efforts to include First Nations on the jury list." Given that First Nations people make up over 40% of the population in the judicial district of Kenora but less than 4% of the jury list, how could the Attorney General believe that his so-called determined efforts are working?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Unfortunately, the leader of the third party's numbers are wrong, but here is the approach. We have a strong justice system and a strong jury system. The ministry, for quite a number of years,

has made determined efforts on two fronts: first of all, to ensure that we know people who reside in more remote First Nations communities, so that we can get the questionnaires to them that are required so that you can get on the jury roll; and secondly, to have individuals fill out the questionnaires and have them returned. Determined efforts have included contacting the Nishnawbe Aski Nation leadership back in 2002 to enlist their assistance; contacting individual community leaders in dozens and dozens of communities to get their assistance and flying in to those communities to enlist further assistance and more. And we will continue to work very hard to continue to strengthen our jury system.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: The Attorney General refers to letters. I wonder if the Attorney General would table those letters, since this is, I think we would all admit, a very serious problem.

But I also know, for example, that one of the issues we're dealing with here is privacy. But privacy legislation would allow the McGuinty government to in fact take lists that were gathered for other purposes and, through obtaining a waiver, use those lists. What's striking is that this issue has been going on now for eight years, and after five years of so-called determined effort under the McGuinty government, we see that, for example for Kashechewan First Nation, no one from that First Nation's names appears on a jury list. How can that be? And will you hold an inquiry to determine how such sorry results are obtained—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I know the leader has said that he was aware of the issue when he was Attorney General and couldn't get anything done about it, which is unfortunate, because what he's really doing is suggesting that the good people of the ministry, the public service and the others who have worked very hard on this issue weren't getting the job done for him. In fact, they've been working very hard. Back in 2002, we asked the NAN leadership for their assistance. We've asked individual community leaders for their assistance. We've flown in to communities. We've sent the questionnaires out.

One of the challenges is that the questionnaires we sent to people in non-First Nations communities have been returned at the rate of one for every two sent out; in First Nations communities, one for every 10 or more sent out has been returned. So it would be great, and we're determined to work with First Nations leaders in further strategies to continue strengthening—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

YOUNG DRIVERS

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Today I have a question for the Minister of Transportation. Over the summer, we saw some very serious accidents involving young drivers on Ontario's roads, some of which unfortunately resulted in

injury and even death. It appears that an increasing number of these accidents are as a result of distracted driving. Research from the Canadian Automobile Association, who were supportive of my private member's bill to ban cellphone use and the use of other portable electronic devices by novice drivers, shows that teenagers account for approximately one quarter of all driver fatalities and injuries. The research also shows that these novice drivers are much more vulnerable to distractions. Would the minister please share with the House what steps his ministry plans to take to protect young drivers and their passengers by addressing the growing problem of distracted driving?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I want to commend the member for putting forward and introducing his private member's bill in this regard; it indicates his strong concern about traffic safety and in particular the younger drivers in the province.

This is something we have to communicate indeed to all Ontarians, not simply to young people themselves, though they are the most vulnerable. That is why this government has put in place a public education program that targets distracted driving, including driver distraction information in all MTO driver handbooks and developing a new beginner driver education curriculum that speaks to improving safe driving skills, focusing on driver distraction.

1130

In May, the Premier asked me to look into any and all electronic devices that would distract all drivers, and since then, we've been in consultation with the CAA and other safety partners, looking at the latest research and studying the best practices in other jurisdictions, with a view—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Again, I have a question for the Minister of Transportation. I look forward to those initiatives that are being introduced; they should help take care of the problem of distracted driving. Unfortunately, it's not the only issue that novice drivers face. Although the graduated licensing system has proven to be very successful in lowering the collision rate of novice drivers and at getting these drivers better equipped for Ontario's roads, teenagers are still causing one quarter of all fatalities and injuries on our roads, and it seems that much more needs to be done. I ask the minister to share with this House how he plans to improve the novice driving system and try to help curb the stubbornly high rates of collisions amongst young drivers in our province?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you—a very good question. I think when all of us, as members of the Legislature, speak to young people, particularly in secondary schools, we point out that their insurance rates are higher and that one of the reasons is that their driving habits have proven not to be as good as others'. That is why we're examining the entire graduated licensing system in Ontario, from start to begin. It was a very good initiative.

It has been improved from time to time over the years. People have identified certain problems, including the member for Oakville, with the system, and so we are consulting again with all of our partners in safety—with the police and others—to try to determine which measures can best be effected to improve the safety record even more. Ontario, year in and year out, has the best safety record in all of North America, but we always want to strive to improve and the member's suggestions will help us to do so.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: To the Premier: Premier, while you've been missing in action this summer, the economy continues to deteriorate. Ontario is hanging by its fingernails, and now you are adding insult to injury on the backs of the hard-working people of this province. Premier, why are you condoning the \$56,000-wedding planner your Ministry of Education has thrown into the overblown accommodation expenses?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I welcome the opportunity to engage, once again, with the members of the opposition to talk about our achievements and our challenges, and to respond to their provocative questions. But because it's the beginning of school, I do have to say that all of my answers in this House are in the context of our government's belief in the strength and excellence of the people who work in our schools and the fact that our students are the best students anywhere, with the most potential.

I have to say that I actually don't know what the member opposite is talking about in terms of a wedding planner. I know that what we have provided to school boards are guidelines for pupil accommodation reviews that allow them to bring in the community to talk about how to provide the best programming for kids in our schools. Given the fact that our students are—we have declining—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Students across this province are not better off today, Madam Minister. The increase in the hotel spending from \$2.5 million to \$3.5 million—\$56,000 of which went to Eventfully Yours, a company that promotes itself as a premier wedding planner. How can you condone such bloated, lavish spending when schools are being closed, reading clinics are stopping and school pools are being closed? Children are suffering.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let's just be clear about what the member opposite is talking about. The member opposite is talking about professional development for more than 8,500 people in our school system. The member opposite is talking about 112 symposia and conferences that allow people from across the province to come together to improve their practice. The member opposite is talking about a 0.083 increase in spending

that allows the Ministry of Education to work with people across this province, in their communities, so that they can improve their practice.

On this side of the House, we believe in publicly funded education and we believe in providing opportunities for professionals in our system to improve their practice for the benefit of the students in our schools.

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE FUNDING

Mr. Rosario Marchese: A question to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities: The faculty strike in Windsor is one of a number of faculty strikes to hit Ontario campuses this year. But faculty negotiators today have to deal with a government-made problem at the bargaining table. That problem is your government's failure to provide universities with stable, ongoing annual funding in a reliable and timely way.

Universities are complaining that since they don't know how much funding they will have in any given year, they cannot negotiate with faculty. When will this government act in a responsible way and provide universities with reliable and predictable funding, so that Ontario students and faculty will not have to suffer the consequences of this government's indifference?

Hon. John Milloy: I'm very pleased to stand and talk about this government's commitment to higher education. I was very proud, in 2005, when we brought forward the Reaching Higher plan, which does exactly what the honourable member speaks about: It delivers five years of predictable funding—\$6.2 billion—the largest investment in post-secondary education in over 40 years.

Let me just share with the Legislature some statistics as a result of the Reaching Higher plan: There are about 100,000 more students studying at colleges and universities, an increase of almost 25%, 120,000 more students are qualifying for grants, and we recently announced the textbook and technology grant. On the operating side, we've seen significant increases in per student funding in our colleges and universities. Over the summer months, we announced almost \$200 million for our colleges for strategic—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Your Reaching Higher plan puts Ontario in 10th position on a per capita basis. We are last. How can you be proud of that? As a result, quality indicators such as class size and student-faculty ratio are deteriorating in a most troubling way. In fact, our student-faculty ratio is the worst in the country. How can you be proud of that? During this period of global economic challenge, your government is failing our universities just when we need them most, just when we have to compete in a global economy, just when we need skilled and knowledge workers so we can prevail in that competition, just when our manufacturing sector, long the mainstay of Ontario's prosperity, is disappearing. When will the minister lift us from last place by pro-

viding stable, reliable and ongoing funding to serve our students and end this strike?

Hon. John Milloy: I'm pleased to say that in 2008-09, the government is projected to allocate \$2.997 billion—\$3 billion—in operating grants to the university sector, an increase of \$1.1 billion, or 57%, over the \$1.9 billion in base funding provided to universities when we took office. University funding per student is projected to increase from \$6,718 in 2002-03 to \$8,109 in 2008-09. I am proud of the investments this government has made in post-secondary education, and I don't think we should be taking any lessons from an NDP party which, when it was in government, cut funding to post-secondary education and cut supports for students.

The Speaker: New question: the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Applause.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Bill Murdoch: You guys don't want to clap.

A question to the Minister of Transportation: In the summertime, I had a chance to drive home from Guelph up Highway 6, and I want to commend the ministry for all the work they're doing on Highway 6—the member from Wellington has brought up many times in the House that it needed reconstruction. The problem is that Highway 6 doesn't quit at Wellington; it continues to Tobermory. My question to the minister is, when will we see some work north of Mar—that's a little place north of Wiarton? From there to Tobermory, the highway is in rough shape and needs reconstruction. I would like the minister to tell us when that could be constructed.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'd like to thank the member for yet another excellent question to me in the House. I want to say to him that I've travelled Highway 6 as well and I understand the many challenges that are there all the way along Highway 6. I can tell him that I particularly remember, when I was Minister of Tourism, the section of Highway 6 he's talking about. It's very important because there are a number of people who want to go to Tobermory. Some of them want to make the trip across to Manitoulin Island and so on. It would be a good showcase for Ontario to have an even more improved highway than we have at the present time.

1140

I'm confident that we're going to continue to make progress as we go up Highway 6 to ensure, for the local people who use it, that it is safe and convenient, but also, for those who are visitors, we'd like to showcase your part of the province of Ontario. We can do that best if we're prepared to invest funding in pavement improvements and other improvements that we can make.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I appreciate that the minister is going to continue the work. We certainly would like a date put to this, and I'm sure that you can make a minister's statement in the House at some time to let us know, and we'll be looking forward to that.

But as you do the work on Highway 6, as you know, in some places the shoulders are paved, but it only seems to be where there are guide rails. We were wondering if you could take some of the pavement that you chew up and put it along the sides of the highway and top it. They do this in Texas and it makes a place for bicycle paths along our highways much safer. I was wondering if the minister would certainly consider that as an option when you're reconstructing these highways. We do have the Chi-Cheemaun that comes off from Manitoulin Island, and lots of people like to come over on their bicycles. If you would look at doing that, we certainly would appreciate it. I'd like to hear the minister's comments on that.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I appreciate the member's independent stand on that particular issue. He is quite right in saying that not only is the highway itself important but people who want to use it, for instance, in some cases and on some roads, bicycling is important, and there is the safety of pulling over—I like his suggestion and the research he has done on his own to indicate what they're doing in Texas. I'd like to investigate that. I'm sure our ministry has looked at that as well. That's a good suggestion, and I would like to look at other places in the province, not only on Highway 6, where we can implement it. I know on major highways which have huge amounts of traffic there is a paved shoulder there, and on other highways a partially paved shoulder, and sometimes a stone shoulder, which is considered safe, but not as nice as what he is suggesting. I like his suggestion and will pursue it with my ministry staff.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I have consulted with the Clerk, and looking at precedents in the past on the questioning of independent members, this follows the order that was set in the past.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question, the member from Ottawa Centre.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. As you well know, Ottawa city council has spoken to me on numerous occasions about the struggles they face since provincial programs were downloaded onto their back. Like many municipalities across the province, they struggle to deal with the burden of an aging infrastructure while maintaining and creating new affordable housing units. As I'm sure you can appreciate, it is difficult to balance competing priorities, as both are important to the success of any municipality. A recent study released by the institute for research and public policy from the University of Waterloo pointed out that across the country our competitiveness depends on a modern, efficient and well-maintained public infrastructure network.

Minister, I have been told that the replacement value of the total social housing stock in Ottawa is estimated at

over \$2.8 billion. The current deficit and the upkeep of social housing units across Ontario is running from \$600 to \$700 per unit. Can the minister please tell this House how we are planning to help the city of Ottawa manage these competing interests?

Hon. Jim Watson: I was very, very proud and pleased to be at the AMO conference when Premier McGuinty announced a \$1.1-billion investment for our municipal communities. The share for the city of Ottawa, which I know our caucus colleagues from Ottawa fought for, was \$77 million. This is money that's going to help improve the infrastructure, roads, bridges and sewer capacity to help clean up the Ottawa River. It was very well received by municipalities across the province. It was through the Investing in Ontario Act, and it proved, once again, that the McGuinty government is serious about partnering in a true, open and honest fashion with our municipal sector—\$1.1 billion was the result of the Investing in Ontario Act, and it's going to go a long way to reducing the infrastructure deficit in our province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Minister, thank you for the information. I'm sure municipalities across Ontario are pleased that we are taking serious steps to come to the table with funding that they need to address the competing priorities. It demonstrates the McGuinty government's commitment to a collaborative and productive relationship with our municipal partners.

I know that in the past, cities such as Ottawa have used provincial money to shore up operating budgets instead of allocating it to priorities such as social housing and infrastructure. The city of Ottawa has a number of high-priority infrastructure projects, everything from widening Hazeldean Road in Kanata, extending Hunt Club Road and rebuilding Bank Street in the heart of Ottawa. In addition, council is faced with challenging social housing circumstances and a federal government that won't come to the table to support their efforts. These competing needs make it difficult for all municipalities.

Minister, can you tell us if this funding can be used for social housing projects?

Hon. Jim Watson: The short answer is yes. Under the Investing in Ontario Act, social housing is one of the permitted uses. I'm also very pleased to remind all members, including the member from Ottawa Centre, who's a great advocate for affordable housing in his community and downtown Ottawa, that the Premier announced \$100 million, the largest single investment in repair and rehabilitation funds for social housing in the history of the province of Ontario. The city of Ottawa has also benefited, to the tune of \$14.6 million for roads and bridges and \$20 million from the MIII program.

Let me just quote, in conclusion, Mayor Larry O'Brien. He said in Nepean This Week, on April 4, 2008: "The province of Ontario has never in its history been as good to eastern Ontario and Ottawa as it has been over the last two years while I've been mayor. Our relationship is warm, it's co-operative and it's moving to the

future. All I can say is I'm very, very happy the city of Ottawa is working in this manner with the McGuinty government because they are coming through for the city of Ottawa." I couldn't agree—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The time for question period has ended. It is now time for petitions.

PETITIONS

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current journeymen tradespeople to apprenticeship ratios in the manufacturing and construction sectors in Ontario are both outdated and unfair; and

"Whereas the ratio of journeymen tradespeople to apprenticeship in many other jurisdictions in Canada is already one to one; and

"Whereas the current journeymen tradespeople to apprenticeship ratios put small and medium-sized businesses in Ontario requiring skilled trades at a disadvantage to other provinces; and

"Whereas MPP Laurie Scott and MPP Garfield Dunlop have both brought forward notices of motion requesting the government and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to make the necessary regulatory changes to current ratios;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately make the necessary regulatory changes to accommodate the construction and manufacturing trades so that the ratio of journeymen tradespeople to apprentices be one to one."

I'm pleased to sign this.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France G  linas: I have a petition from the people of Kenora to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government through LHINs is forcing the Lake of the Woods District Hospital to cut services due to inadequate funding; and

"Whereas the Lake of the Woods District Hospital has been forced to look at closing its intensive care unit; and

"Whereas these cuts will increase risk of death among critical care patients and will increase waiting times in the emergency room; and

"Whereas eliminating intensive care in Kenora will not save the Ontario taxpayer any money as any savings will be eaten up by paying for critical care patient transfers to other centres;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Minister of Health stop the process of health care cuts in local community hospitals like the Lake of the

Woods District Hospital in Kenora and realize that his LHINs model is another one-size-fits-all model that doesn't work in rural Ontario."

This petition has been signed by over 300 people from Kenora, and I will be sending it down with page Timothy.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Joe Dickson: To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario: This will be the final petition in reference to this item.

"Whereas the Central East Local Health Integration Network (CE-LHIN) board of directors has approved the Rouge Valley Health System's deficit elimination plan, subject to public meetings; and

"Whereas, despite the significant expansion of the Ajax-Pickering hospital, the largest in its 53-year history, a project that could reach \$100 million, of which 90% is funded by the Ontario government, this plan now calls for the ill-advised transfer of 20 mental health unit beds from Ajax-Pickering hospital to the Centenary health centre in Scarborough; and

"Whereas one of the factors for the successful treatment of patients in the mental health unit is support from family and friends, and the distance to Centenary health centre would negatively impact on the quality care for residents of Ajax and Pickering; and

"Whereas it is also imperative for Rouge Valley Health System to balance its budget, eliminate its deficit and debt and realize the benefits of additional Ontario government funding;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Rouge Valley Health System continue to provide the current level of service to our Ajax-Pickering hospital, which now serves the fastest-growing communities of west Durham; and

"That the Ajax-Pickering hospital retain the badly needed 20-bed mental health unit."

I shall pass this to Matthew.

1150

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Bill Murdoch: To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the skyrocketing price of gasoline is causing hardship to families across Ontario; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government charges a gasoline tax of 14.7 cents per litre to drivers in all parts of Ontario; and

"Whereas gasoline tax revenues now go exclusively to big cities with transit systems, while roads and bridges crumble in other communities across Ontario; and

"Whereas residents of Bruce-Grey have been shut out of provincial gasoline tax revenues to which they have contributed; and

"Whereas whatever one-time money that has flowed to municipalities from the McGuinty Liberal government has been neither stable nor predictable, and has been insufficient to meet our infrastructure needs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to redistribute provincial gasoline tax revenues fairly to all communities across the province."

I have signed this.

ANGUS EARLY YEARS CENTRE

Mr. Jim Wilson: To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the way in which we care for children during their first six years sets the stage for a child's lifelong learning, behaviour and health; and

"Whereas the Angus Early Years Centre offers vital services to help parents and caregivers in all aspects of early childhood development, including early learning and literacy programs and important links to early years programs in the community; and

"Whereas E3 Community Services is currently reviewing the feasibility of continuing to operate the Angus Early Years Centre;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Children and Youth Services take every step necessary to ensure that the Early Years Centre at 211 Mill Street in Angus remains open so that it can continue to be a place where parents and caregivers can get answers to questions from early years professionals and so that they can continue to participate in the excellent programs that are currently being offered in Angus."

I agree with this petition and I sign it.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition prepared by the Ontario Health Coalition and supported by the people of Midland.

"Whereas understaffing in Ontario's nursing homes is a serious problem resulting in inadequate care for residents and unsafe conditions for staff; and

"Whereas after the Harris government removed the regulations providing minimum care levels in 1995, hours of care dropped below the previous 2.25 hour/day minimum; and

"Whereas the recent improvements in hours of care are not adequate, vary widely and are not held to accountable standards;

"Whereas there is currently nothing in legislation to protect residents and staff from renewed cuts to care levels by future governments; and

"Whereas care needs have measurably increased with aging and the movement of people with more complex health needs from hospitals into long-term-care homes...."

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to "immediately enact and fund an average care standard of 3.5 hours per resident per day in the regulations under the new Long-Term Care Homes Act."

I fully support this petition and will affix my name to it and sent it with page Marissa.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop unlawful firearms in vehicles.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the growing number of unlawful firearms in motor vehicles is threatening innocent citizens and our police officers;

"Whereas police officers, military personnel and lawfully licensed persons are the only people allowed to possess firearms;

"Whereas a growing number of unlawful firearms are transported, smuggled and being found in motor vehicles;

"Whereas impounding motor vehicles and suspending driver's licences of persons possessing unlawful firearms would aid the police in their efforts to make our streets safer;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 56, entitled the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act, 2008, into law, so that we can reduce the number of crimes involving firearms in our communities."

I support this petition and I affix my name to it.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Ms. Laurie Scott: A petition for fair journeyman tradespeople to apprenticeship ratios.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current journeymen tradespeople to apprenticeship ratios in the manufacturing and construction sectors in Ontario are both outdated and unfair; and

"Whereas the ratio of journeymen tradespeople to apprenticeship in many other jurisdictions in Canada is already one to one; and

"Whereas the current journeymen tradespeople to apprenticeship ratio puts small and medium-sized businesses in Ontario requiring skilled trades at a disadvantage to other provinces; and

"Whereas MPP Laurie Scott and MPP Garfield Dunlop have both brought forward a notice of motion requesting that the government and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities make the necessary regulatory changes to current ratios;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately make the necessary regulatory changes to accommodate the construction and manufacturing trades so that the ratio of journeymen tradespeople to apprentices be one to one."

We hope the minister on Thursday votes for this motion.

PROTECTION FOR MINERS

M^{me} France G  linas: I have a petition prepared by the family of Lyle Defoe and supported by the people of Trenton.

"Whereas the current legislation contained in the Ontario health and safety act and regulations for mines and mining plants does not adequately protect the lives of miners, we request revisions to the act;

"Lyle Everett Defoe and the scoop tram he was operating fell 150 feet down an open stope (July 23, 2007). Lyle was 25 years and 15 days old when he was killed at Xstrata Kidd Creek mine site, Timmins."

The mining regulation "states that, 'A shaft, raise or other opening in an underground mine shall be securely fenced, covered or otherwise guarded....' The stope where Lyle was killed was protected by a length of orange plastic snow fence and a rope with a warning sign. These barriers would not have been visible if the bucket of the scoop tram was raised. Lyle's body was recovered from behind the scoop tram.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Concrete berms must be mandatory to protect all open stopes and raises;

"All miners and contractors working underground must have working communication devices and personal locators;

"All equipment involved in injuries and fatalities must be recovered and examined unless such recovery would endanger the lives of others; and

"The entire act must be reviewed and amended to better protect underground workers."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it, and send it with page Scarlett.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario in support of the Provincial Animal Welfare Act, Bill 50.

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act has not been updated since 1919;

"Whereas Bill 50 would require all veterinarians to report suspected abuse and neglect, protecting veterinarians from liability;

"Whereas it would allow the OSPCA to inspect and investigate places where animals are kept;

"Whereas the bill would prohibit the training of animals to fight;

"Whereas Bill 50 would allow the OSPCA to inspect roadside zoos;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 50, entitled the Provincial

Animal Welfare Act, 2008, to protect our animal friends."

I support this position and affix my name to it.

ANTI-TOBACCO LEGISLATION

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly signed by numerous people from my riding. It says:

"Whereas the Liberal government recently passed the Smoke-Free Ontario Act; and

"Whereas the act prohibits sale and supply of tobacco to a person who is less than 19 years old; and

"Whereas the Tobacco Tax Act requires that a tobacco tax rate of 11.1 cents applies to every cigarette and on every gram or part gram of tobacco sold in Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that the two acts be enforced on all retailers in Ontario who sell, offer for sale or store tobacco."

I have signed this.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France G  linas: I have a petition prepared by the Ontario Health Coalition and supported by the people from Guelph. It reads:

"Whereas understaffing in Ontario's nursing homes is a serious problem resulting in inadequate care for residents and unsafe conditions for staff;

"Whereas after the Harris government removed the regulations providing minimum care levels in 1995, hours of care dropped below the previous 2.25 hour/day minimum;

"Whereas the recent improvements in hours of care are not adequate, vary widely and are not held to accountable standards;

"Whereas there is currently nothing in legislation to protect residents and staff from renewed cuts to care levels by future governments; and

"Whereas care needs have measurably increased with aging and the movement of people with more complex health needs from hospitals into long-term-care homes;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows...."

They call on the government of Ontario to "immediately enact and fund an average care standard of 3.5 hours per resident per day in the regulations under the new Long-Term Care Homes Act."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it, and send it with page Marissa.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition from Amber Fletcher, and she went across the province to get

signatures in support of the Provincial Animal Welfare Act.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act has not been updated since 1919;

"Whereas Bill 50 would require all veterinarians to report suspected abuse and neglect, protecting veterinarians from liability;

"Whereas it would allow the OSPCA to inspect and investigate places where animals are kept;

"Whereas the bill would prohibit the training of animals to fight;

"Whereas Bill 50 would allow the OSPCA to inspect roadside zoos;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 50, entitled the Provincial Animal Welfare Act, 2008, to protect our animal friends."

I support this petition and I give it to the page.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It appears that petitions for the day have ended. This House will stand recessed until one o'clock this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1201 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

AGRICULTURE FUNDING

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Our party understands that one of the keys to a strong rural economy is a healthy agriculture industry, but across Ontario there are farmers close to losing their farms because of the McGuinty government. Farmers continually told the government that their support programs wouldn't work, and when the auditor reported on these serious problems, the minister wouldn't even interrupt her summer vacation to deal with them.

While the Premier was out relaxing by the pool, we were out talking to the farmers. Last week, John Tory and I met with the Veyhof family, one of the many young farmers who didn't receive the support that they should have through the Ontario cattle, hog and horticultural program.

I know the McGuinty government has been away on summer vacation for a while, so let me remind them of what's wrong with their program.

The biggest challenges for hog farmers like the Veyhofs occurred in 2007, but the program you designed uses data from 2005 and 2006 to qualify, and data as old as the year 2000 to calculate the payments. Retired and even deceased farmers received cheques, while young farmers who were just starting out and struggling to make it received next to nothing. There was no application process and no appeal.

While the Premier was at the cottage, my colleague Toby Barrett heard from another struggling farmer, an

award-winning hog farmer who started in 2005 and didn't receive a single cent under the program.

I sure would like to know what the Premier and the Minister of Agriculture did on their summer vacation, because it wasn't helping farmers, saving manufacturing jobs or taking steps to make Ontario's economy grow strong again.

CENTRE DE SANTÉ COMMUNAUTAIRE

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: Je désire souhaiter un bon retour à tous les membres des trois partis représentés ici à la Chambre, qui ont eu une année pleine d'activités, soit par des rencontres de comités permanents et/ou de travail dans leur circonscription.

I wish to thank the McGuinty government on behalf of the Centre de santé communautaire de l'Estrie à Bourget, for without this government's assistance, this new satellite centre which offers medical services in both official languages would never have seen the light of day.

Ce centre offre des programmes régionaux tels que la petite enfance et l'éducation en diabète, tout en étant partenaire d'un très grand nombre d'initiatives locales, provinciales et nationales. Je tiens à féliciter un groupe de citoyens de Bourget, dont M. Guy Lepage et M^{me} Rachel Potvin. Ce groupe a travaillé avec constance afin d'arriver à obtenir un tel centre.

I wish to congratulate Minister Caplan on his new appointment. I am sure he will continue the good work of his predecessor, George Smitherman. On August 25, the Honourable David Caplan fulfilled the Honourable George Smitherman's promise and attended the official opening of the health centre. I was very proud to be there that day to demonstrate once again that the McGuinty government responds—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The member for Wellington-Halton Hills.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Ted Arnott: Now that the Legislature is finally back in session, Ontarians are asking, "Where has the Premier been all this time?" The answer? He's been missing in action. While the province under his leadership shuffles from prosperity to poverty, the best the Premier can do after a long summer of bad economic news is to shuffle his cabinet. Instead of fixing the tax structure to strengthen the Ontario economy, the Premier is strengthening the future leadership ambitions of his new Minister of Economic Development. The Premier's action, or lack thereof, has done nothing to restore confidence in the Ontario economy. It has done nothing to bring hope to struggling manufacturers.

The Ontario PC caucus, in contrast, has been very busy. Last week at John Tory's economic summit, experts told us what must be done: We must fix Ontario's personal and business tax regime.

Quoted today in the *Globe and Mail* is Roger Martin, dean of the Rotman School of Management at U of T, who says that Ontario has "one of the dumbest tax structures on the face of the planet."

While the Premier pretends he's powerless, as he did today in question period, we are exposing the truth that despite our external challenges, the Premier is failing to do his part. It's time for him to stop denying the problem, stop deflecting the blame, and start doing his job.

BEACH DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise today to talk about the good citizens of the Beach, that idyllic place in Toronto where everyone wishes they lived but only the select few, or the lucky few, have that opportunity.

The residents at the Beach are troubled these days, though. There is an application to build a condominium right on the beach at the bottom of Neville Park. The good citizens are coming together as I've never seen them do before. They held a fundraiser on September 7 at Kew Gardens, attended by hundreds of people in spite of the rain, to try to save their beloved Beach. I want to give special commendation to Harold Tabone and the Beach Lakefront Neighbourhood Association for the work they did, bringing together musicians and artists.

They had to do all this because they require approximately \$100,000 to hire a lawyer and a planner if and when this case goes before the Ontario Municipal Board. The issue went before the community council, and the community council unanimously agreed that there should be no condo on the beach. It goes before city council this week, and I think the same thing is going to happen. But the developer has said he is going to the Ontario Municipal Board.

The people of the Beach question the value of that unelected body, they question the right to supersede the official plan of the city of Toronto and they question why developers with big pockets are forcing them into this position.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Reza Moridi: I rise today to speak of an organization known as Reena, a not-for-profit social service agency established five years ago that provides residential support for over 300 adults as well as outreach programs that enhance the lives of developmentally disabled individuals. In addition, Reena provides valuable internships to post-secondary students. Every year, Reena offers more than 3,000 training places to 50 external agencies. Reena has established an accredited program in partnership with George Brown College.

This summer, I had the privilege of attending the graduation ceremony of Reena's developmental disabilities counsellor program at this college. I also had the opportunity of visiting Reena's facilities, including a family home centre in Richmond Hill, and saw first-hand the

dedication and contribution of the management, staff and volunteers.

I wish to thank all those who work in the field of developmental services. Due to their dedication and hard work, our society can move forward together and more people will be able to live with independence, dignity and self-reliance.

It is my pleasure to acknowledge the contributions of Sandy Keshen, CEO;Carolynn Morrison, past chair; Tali Nizic, a vice-chair of Reena; and their colleagues in the members' gallery.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Last Thursday, 78 employees of Huronia Precision Plastics in Midland found out that they no longer had their highly skilled jobs. The company can no longer compete in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario. You may recall that when Mike Harris was Premier of this province, over one million jobs were created. Huronia Precision Plastics was part of that, and they thrived during the Harris years. But they're no longer in business, and we now have 78 people looking for new work. Hopefully they can be retrained to find something.

One of the areas where we can help with retraining is in apprenticeship ratios. We know that—we've brought that up a number of times in the House—but the minister refuses to listen to this.

This Thursday, the House will have an opportunity to debate a motion by Ms. Scott that says: "In the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario and the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should immediately make the necessary regulatory changes to accommodate the construction and manufacturing trades so that the ratio of journeymen and tradespeople to apprentices be one to one."

This is a no-brainer. There's no reason why this can't be implemented. It's implemented in every other province in this country. This is an opportunity to help retrain some of these people who have lost these manufacturing jobs that may not come back unless we elect a Conservative government that will bring the manufacturing agenda back to this province.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I was recently honoured to join Premier McGuinty in my riding of Mississauga-Brampton South, where we celebrated the news that the Ontario government will be providing a \$5.13-million loan to 2Source Manufacturing Inc.; 2Source is an exciting aerospace supplier that specializes in landing gear bushings for commercial and military aircraft and has become a leading provider of high-precision bushings in the aircraft industry around the world. This investment in 2Source also will help support 138 project-related jobs, including the creation of 70 new jobs in my riding of Mississauga-Brampton South. We are facing some difficult economic challenges, but investments like this

will help to ensure Ontario's manufacturing sector remains competitive in the global economy.

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I would like to thank Robert Glegg and everyone at 2Source Manufacturing for helping to ensure that Mississauga remains a worldwide leader in innovation and technology. With cutting-edge companies like 2Source leading the way, the sky is the limit for our economy.

INTERNATIONAL PLOWING MATCH

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I rise to inform the Legislature of the great success that was this past week's International Plowing Match in the community of Teeswater, which happens to be located in the most beautiful riding in the province of Ontario, that being Huron-Bruce. Bruce county played host to the annual event at the family farm of Wayne and Wendy McKague of Teeswater, who were gracious in their hosting duties throughout the week.

From tractor square dancing to the world's longest picnic table, there were many new and exciting displays and events this year that helped set this match apart and draw in visitors from all over Ontario to support the local economy. A touch of inclement weather to start the week could not dampen the spirits of organizers and attendees from across the country. It's estimated a total of 84,000 people walked through the gates of the IPM over the five-day period, making the match an overwhelming success by any standard.

I also want to thank those members who attended the parade and opening ceremonies, including over 40 members from the McGuinty government, including Premier McGuinty himself. The community of Teeswater and the organizers of the 2008 IPM have set the bar for the rest of the province for future plowing matches with their first-class hospitality, their goodwill, and their organization.

To all those who have attended the International Plowing Match in the past and going forward in the future, we thank you.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I rise today to highlight two items of interest in my riding of Kitchener-Conestoga. Number one: It's that time of year again; Oktoberfest is here again in Kitchener-Waterloo region. I invite you all to attend beginning October 10, and we'll also have a taste of Oktoberfest here at Queen's Park on September 29.

The second item: We have two hospitals in Kitchener-Waterloo, St. Mary's and Grand River Hospital. I want to commend the hard work of our physicians. Last week, the McGuinty government reached a tentative agreement with the Ontario Medical Association that will enable us to continue delivering better health care for all Ontarians, improving access to family care and reducing wait times.

Unfortunately, some are choosing to play politics and refusing to recognize this positive development. Specifically, the member from Nickel Belt dismissed the agreement as simply a "massive infusion of funds" and further "suggested that investments in physicians do not improve access" to care "or reduce wait times." These statements are disrespectful of the hard work doctors in my riding of Kitchener-Conestoga and across the province undertake everyday.

This agreement will provide funding to for up to 500 nurses and work to get family physicians for 500,000 people in Ontario who need family health care. The Liberal government is committed to reducing wait times and investing in doctors, both in my riding of Kitchener-Conestoga and across the province.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. John Milloy: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I wish to correct my own record from question period today. In response to a question about apprenticeship ratios, I referenced a 25% increase. I wish to clarify that this increase was in reference to apprenticeship registrations.

TABLING OF SESSIONAL PAPERS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that during the adjournment, the following reports were tabled: On June 23, 2008, the 2007 annual report of the Office of the Integrity Commissioner; on July 17, 2008, order in council number 1175/2008, dated June 25, 2008, appointing Greg Essensa as Chief Electoral Officer and order-in-council number 1176/2008, dated June 25, 2008, appointing Irwin Elman as the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth;

On August 12, 2008, a request by the member for Guelph, Mrs. Sandals, to Lynn Morrison, Acting Integrity Commissioner, for an opinion pursuant to section 30(1) of the Members' Integrity Act, 1994, on whether the member for Halton, Mr. Chudleigh, has contravened the act or Ontario parliamentary convention;

On August 29, 2008, pursuant to section 28 of the Auditor General Act, the audited financial statements of the Office of the Auditor General for the year ended March 31, 2008.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that on June 18, the Lieutenant Governor was pleased to assent to certain bills in his office.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The following are the titles of the bills to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 41, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in relation to the use of speed-limiting systems in com-

mercial motor vehicles / Projet de loi 41, Loi modifiant le Code de la route relativement à l'utilisation de systèmes limiteurs de vitesse dans les véhicules utilitaires.

Bill 48, An Act to regulate payday loans and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 48, Loi visant à réglementer les prêts sur salaire et à apporter des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

Bill 55, An Act to enact the Ontario French-language Educational Communications Authority Act, 2008 and make complementary amendments to the Ontario Educational Communications Authority Act / Projet de loi 55, Loi édictant la Loi de 2008 sur l'Office des télécommunications éducatives de langue française de l'Ontario et apportant des modifications complémentaires à la Loi sur l'Office de la télécommunication éducative de l'Ontario.

Bill 64, An Act to amend the Pesticides Act to prohibit the use and sale of pesticides that may be used for cosmetic purposes / Projet de loi 64, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les pesticides en vue d'interdire l'usage et la vente de pesticides pouvant être utilisés à des fins esthétiques.

Bill 69, An Act to protect children from second-hand tobacco smoke in motor vehicles by amending the Smoke-Free Ontario Act / Projet de loi 69, Loi modifiant la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée pour protéger les enfants contre le tabagisme passif dans les véhicules automobiles.

Bill 80, An Act to establish Algoma University and to dissolve Algoma University College / Projet de loi 80, Loi portant création de l'Université Algoma et dissolution de l'Algoma University College.

Bill Pr2, An Act to revive Grand Avenue Holdings Ltd.

Bill Pr3, An Act respecting St. Andrew's Congregation of the United Church of Canada at Toronto.

Bill Pr4, An Act to revive 872440 Ontario Inc.

Bill Pr5, An Act respecting Madresa Ashraful Uloom.

Bill Pr6, An Act to revive 716056 Ontario Ltd.

Bill Pr7, An Act to revive 827291 Ontario Ltd.

Bill Pr8, An Act to revive 719226 Ontario Ltd.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that during the adjournment, the Clerk received the reports on intended appointments dated August 19, August 20 and September 18, 2008, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 107(f)9, the reports are deemed to be adopted by the House.

Reports deemed adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Pursuant to the order of the House dated June 17, 2008, I beg leave to present a report on the Centre of Forensic Sciences from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Sterling presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations. Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Yes, I will carry out the debate with regard to this. This was a review of the Centre of Forensic Sciences for Ontario. There are two offices, one here in Toronto and one in Sault Ste. Marie, to cover some of the northern area. The centre does nearly 13,000 analytical reports each year and it employs 238 people to do that. Their budget is about \$25.5 million. The Auditor General, in his report of December 2007, pointed to the fact that some of the turnaround times with regard to the reports were about twice as long as some other jurisdictions, and therefore of some concern in that delay can hinder our justice system.

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It's important to recognize too, as the committee did, that accuracy is paramount in terms of their work, because an inaccurate result could lead to a wrongful conviction in our justice system.

The members of the committee felt that the centre was doing a very credible job. They did question, however, whether they could improve the turnaround times, given that in last year's budget the government decreased their resources by \$400,000, from \$25.5 million to about \$25 million. The committee asked for additional information in the coming year with regard to their success in improving turnaround times and asked specific questions as to how much time scientists were spending in the courtrooms of Ontario rather than doing the analytical work in their labs.

The committee found the people who represented the centre extremely honest and straightforward in their reply, and we will look forward to their response to our recommendations, as we believe that this is a very, very important service that is provided to the people of Ontario.

Lastly, the centre operates on a central budget from the government of Ontario, and police forces using their services do not pay a fee. There was some concern within the committee as to whether or not the centre could strike the right priorities with regard to doing the work, and there was some question because other jurisdictions have a pay-for-service charge paid by police forces as well.

However, we do believe that overall they are doing excellent work. These are dedicated public servants, and we look forward to their response to our recommendations.

I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Michael Prue: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr9, An Act to revive 2029652 Ontario Ltd.

Bill Pr11, An Act to revive Eugerry Investments Limited

Bill Pr13, An Act to revive 2076467 Ontario Inc.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Report adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Estimates.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): Pursuant to standing order 61(a,) the following estimates (2008-09) are reported back to the House as they were not previously selected by the committee for consideration and are deemed to be passed by the committee:

Office of the Assembly

201 Office of the Assembly \$134,516,700

202 Commission(er)s \$20,027,800

Office of the Auditor General

2501 Office of the Auditor General \$15,885,300

Office of the Chief Electoral Officer

501 Office of the Chief Electoral Officer
\$15,447,500—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Pursuant to standing order 61(b), the report of the committee is deemed to be received and the estimates of the offices named therein not being selected for consideration by the committee are deemed to be concurred in.

Report deemed received.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Pat Hoy: Speaker, pursuant to the order of the House of Tuesday 17 June 2008, I beg leave to present a report on the review of the Ontario health premium from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Pat Hoy: Speaker, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 77, An Act to provide services to persons with developmental disabilities, to repeal the Developmental Services Act and to amend certain other statutes / Projet de loi 77, Loi visant à prévoir des services pour les personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle, à abroger la Loi sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle et à modifier d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on General Government and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 90, An Act to enact the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act, 2008, to repeal the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act and to make related amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 90, Loi édictant la Loi de 2008 sur la négociation collective dans les collèges, abrogeant la Loi sur la négociation collective dans les collèges et apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 50, An Act to amend the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act / Projet de loi 50,

Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société de protection des animaux de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LAKE SIMCOE PROTECTION ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LA PROTECTION DU LAC SIMCOE

Mr. Gerretsen moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 99, An Act to protect and restore the ecological health of the Lake Simcoe watershed and to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act in respect of water quality trading / Projet de loi 99, Loi visant à protéger et à rétablir la santé écologique du bassin hydrographique du lac Simcoe et à modifier la Loi sur les ressources en eau de l'Ontario en ce qui concerne un système d'échange axé sur la qualité de l'eau.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate? Mr. Gerretsen.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my very capable parliamentary assistant, the member from Oakville.

Today, I am very pleased to rise in this House and to start the debate on second reading of Bill 99, our government's proposed Lake Simcoe Protection Act. You may recall that this was introduced during the last session, in the second-last week of June. It delivers on the commitment that Premier McGuinty made and takes an important step forward on behalf of the environment of all of Ontario. If passed, it would allow us to set the framework for a long-term protection plan for Lake Simcoe and its watershed.

I thought it would be helpful to just review, especially for those people who aren't familiar with the area, what Lake Simcoe really is all about and where it's located. It's named after John Graves Simcoe, the Lieutenant Governor of Canada in 1793, as well as his father.

As many of in this chamber know, it's located within an hour's drive of more than half the population of the province—just an hour's drive north of Toronto. It's the largest inland lake, other than the Great Lakes, in southern Ontario, and its surface area is about 750 square kilometres, being about 30 kilometres in length and 25 kilometres in width. The average depth is about 15 metres, but it does go to a maximum depth of some 41 metres, and 35 different rivers and streams flow into Lake Simcoe, including the Holland River, the Black River, the Beaver River, the Pefferlaw River and the Uxbridge Brook, and almost 4,000 kilometres of streams flow into the lake as well.

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There are a few islands in the lake; they include Georgina Island, Thorah Island, Strawberry Island, Snake Island, Fox Island and Grape Island. As well, there are two major urban settlements located right on the lake, Barrie and Orillia. It's bordered by Simcoe county and York and Durham regions and encompasses some 23 municipalities that border onto Lake Simcoe. Over 350,000 people live in the Lake Simcoe watershed, and during the summer that goes up to well over 400,000 at various times. Also, you may be interested in knowing that about 50% of the watershed's area is currently agricultural; urban and rural development and roads make up an estimated 15%. I think that gives you a little bit of an idea as to what the lake is all about and how important it is to the province of Ontario.

At the time of the first contact by European settlers in the 17th century, this lake was called "Beautiful Water" by the Huron people living in the area. It is still a beautiful water, there's no doubt about that, but sadly it has not always been treated with the respect that it deserves.

As I stated before, it's the largest body of water in southern Ontario outside of the Great Lakes, and it has a complex ecosystem that is home to many different fish species, aquatic plants and animals. Its watershed holds ecologically important wetlands, woodlands and wildlife as well as a prime agricultural area and specialty crops in areas such as the Holland Marsh. It also provides drinking water for eight different municipalities and supports a thriving tourism industry and diverse recreational activities.

Lake Simcoe is a vital resource, important to the strength of our people and of our province, yet it is not in good health. The lake is under stress and under increasing pressure from urban as well as rural development, population growth, pollutants and invasive species, as well as climate change. These pressures have affected the shoreline, the water quality of the lake and the general ecological health of the surrounding area as well.

Our government, under the leadership of Premier McGuinty, is absolutely committed to protecting Lake Simcoe and restoring the natural balance of its ecosystem. We are joined in this goal by local municipalities, residents, conservation authorities, farmers, environmental groups, developers, First Nation communities as well as the tourism industry, all of which have been involved in the comprehensive process leading up to the legislation we are considering here today.

Our government is a fierce defender of the environment and of the right of all Ontarians to enjoy clean and healthy air, water and land. If passed, Bill 99 will build upon the other laws and measures we have put into place to protect Ontario's environment. This bill, for example, would complement the work that is currently being done under the Clean Water Act. It would protect and restore the ecological health of the Lake Simcoe watershed, which in turn will safeguard the lake as a source of safe drinking water for the many communities that depend on

it. It would also allow us as a government to create the Lake Simcoe protection plan. The act is an enabling document that allows us, in effect, to build a plan for the lake and the surrounding watershed. This plan would complement existing provincial plans, working to balance a sustainable environment with a growing population and economy—plans such as the growth plan, the Oak Ridges moraine conservation plan and the greenbelt plan. It would also build on the steps already taken on behalf of Lake Simcoe over the last 10 to 15 years. Together with our partners, we've upgraded sewage treatment plants and stormwater facilities, improved aquatic habitat and improved agricultural practices. For example, earlier this year we invested \$850,000 to help reduce the amount of phosphorus entering into the lake, as an interim measure. The amount of phosphorus in the lake is of prime and key concern. When a lake is healthy, cold-water fish such as lake trout and lake whitefish are abundant and active. This is not the case with respect to Lake Simcoe today. Over the years, it has seen a dramatic decline in its cold-water-fish community. The fish population cannot reproduce and sustain itself naturally. Their continued existence in the lake is almost entirely due to the currently existing stocking programs. These problems stem from an excessive amount of nutrients, specifically phosphorus, entering Lake Simcoe as a result of human activities within the watershed. Phosphorus loading causes excessive plant growth, and when these plants decay, they use up oxygen young fish need to survive.

With hard work and commitment by many, phosphorus levels have been reduced from more than 100 tonnes per year a number of years ago to 67 tonnes today, and the water quality has seen some level of improvement. But quite frankly, we need to do better than that and there's still much work to be done.

While our government has placed interim limits on phosphorus discharges from sewage plants just recently, earlier this year, and while we're promoting actions people can take in their homes and workplaces to reduce their phosphorus footprint, we also recognize that a long-term, comprehensive watershed approach to phosphorus management is imperative to the future health of Lake Simcoe and its ecosystem.

Bill 99, if passed, would allow us to develop this approach. The proposed plan would address excessive phosphorus and other pollutants as a principal goal, but it would go much further than that. The plan would directly affect key decisions involving activities that may cause harm to the ecological health of the watershed. It would allow us to adapt our efforts to respond to new challenges like climate change and invasive species. And it would ensure the promotion of environmentally sustainable land use and development practices.

I want to emphasize that just as careful monitoring and research has been instrumental in identifying the issues with Lake Simcoe and the solutions to date, the proposed plan will be based upon the best available science and information. It will be a science-based plan. It would set

out priorities and targets for addressing the key threats to the lake. A mix of regulatory and non-regulatory measures will achieve that goal and the targets. Regular monitoring will take place.

We are assisted in these goals by the Lake Simcoe advisory committee appointed by our government earlier this year. This team of respected scientists and researchers has already created a list of primary threats it considers most responsible for impairing the ecological health of the Lake Simcoe watershed. I can tell you that this group of renowned scientists has had numerous meetings over the last six months. The committee has provided us with a bedrock of good science, their best advice on key indicators of environmental health, achievable targets we can work towards, and possible actions to address threats to the health of the Lake Simcoe ecosystem. We thank them for their ongoing advice and contribution. Their work is extremely important.

Our government will also be investing, on behalf of the people of Ontario, \$20 million over four years for stewardship, science and monitoring actions, and for implementing the long-term plan to protect Lake Simcoe. A large part of this \$20-million funding commitment will help farmers with the cost of putting in place measures to reduce agricultural impacts on the lake. I should say that local farmers have already made significant progress in implementing improved agricultural practices and technologies. We will continue to work with the farming community to be sure the funds are used in the most beneficial way. Obviously, we will be heavily relying on the work of our own Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. In fact, the consultation process has been intrinsic throughout the process of developing this legislation.

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Earlier this year, our government released a discussion paper that invited public input on the full range of measures proposed. Among other places, this paper was posted on the Environmental Registry, and we received many, many thoughtful comments. We also used the discussion paper as the basis for workshops with community groups and associations and for information forums with members of the public. We wanted to be sure that anyone interested in the future of Lake Simcoe had an opportunity to bring forward ideas, provide suggestions and become more deeply involved in developing the strategy.

I and members of my staff personally attended sessions in both Barrie and Newmarket, and I can tell you we were very pleased with the large turnout and the level of informed participation. I would dare say that at each location we probably had at least 150 people or so who shared their views on the importance of the lake and what should be done collectively to protect it.

The desire to protect the lake was extremely strong. Let me just give you a couple of examples of some of the statements that were made at that time. One resident said, "This lake is a gem and we need to stand up and ask how we can preserve this gem for the entire province into the future"—a very simple statement but very true. A fifth-

generation cottager said, "If we want our lake to survive, we simply need to put Lake Simcoe first." The contribution of those who live, work and play in the Lake Simcoe area has been tremendous.

To help reach out even more into the community, our government appointed a 22-member stakeholder advisory committee. This group represents a wide range of interests around the lake from developers to farmers, environmentalists, municipal leaders, people who are just simply interested in the lake, tourist operators. This 22-member stakeholder advisory committee has been working extremely hard and we appreciate the advice they've given. I've had an opportunity to meet with both them and the science advisory committee on a couple of occasions.

Both of these groups represent a wide range of interests around Lake Simcoe and provide valuable advice on the best long-term approach to protect the health of the lake. The stakeholder advisory committee has worked hard to help us ensure the policies being developed are reflecting the broadest possible range of perspectives, both social and environmental, and economic, while remaining at the same time practical and realistic.

We've also engaged the First Nations communities, particularly those with cultural, economic and heritage links to Lake Simcoe—Georgina Island is one example—to learn from their knowledge of the lake and to seek their ideas how to protect it for future generations. In particular, I want to thank the Chippewas of Georgina Island for their valuable advice and very wise counsel.

Starting this past spring and in co-operation with the science and stakeholder advisory committees and the First Nations communities, my ministry has been preparing a draft of what a proposed Lake Simcoe protection plan may look like and the principles that should be contained therein. We brought together many different groups and perspectives to find solutions.

Our proposed legislation provides for a plan to improve the state of the lake, including reducing, as I mentioned before, the high phosphorus loadings. What we will be proposing at the end is a balanced plan, one that allows us to see and understand what ails the lake and what we need to do collaboratively to bring it back to a state of good health.

We will, later on this fall, be taking the next step by releasing our proposed plan for public comment. It will be posted on the EBR.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, a clean, healthy environment dovetails with a strong economy; they go hand in hand. Our proposal to protect Lake Simcoe would help secure jobs and prosperity.

Tourism and recreation are among the important industries in this particular area of Lake Simcoe, and they are extremely dependent upon a healthy lake. You may be interested in knowing that more than \$200 million is generated annually through recreational activities such as fishing, boating and camping, with over \$110 million from fishing alone. Tourism brings in millions more and supports a substantial number of local businesses and the

jobs they create. Protecting Lake Simcoe will ensure that it remains one of Ontario's most popular tourism and recreation destinations.

Farming activities in the watershed are just as crucial to the local economy. They generate about \$300 million annually. If passed, this bill would support measures such as the stewardship programs I talked about earlier to ensure sustainable agricultural operations for the future.

In fact, we are looking to the future in many ways with this bill. Speaker, as you know from many of the other programs that have been talked about in this House over the last three or four years, the population of the greater Golden Horseshoe area is expected to grow by about 3.7 million over the next 25 years, and the growth plan has identified the city of Barrie and the town of Newmarket as urban growth centres. This means that thousands more people will be joining the already 350,000 permanent residents already settled in the Lake Simcoe watershed.

Protecting the ecological health of the lake is very much at the heart of the proposed legislation, and we simply have to do it right if we want to accommodate that kind of growth.

I want to make it absolutely clear that it's not about a trade-off between economic development and the environment; it's about how to protect the environment while the economy grows at the same time. We are putting the health of the ecosystem—in this case, Lake Simcoe—first, because a clean lake is the bedrock of a great economy.

Without a healthy lake, tourism, cottaging and fishing will all decline, along with their many economic spinoffs. By taking control now, by setting out a strategy and by ensuring that everyone who benefits from Lake Simcoe does their part to make it better and keep it that way, we can help make sure that the lake and its surrounding watershed remain healthy as the population and economy continue to grow and prosper in years to come.

We can take the lessons learned as we develop and implement the proposed plan to protect other watersheds across Ontario as well. We can, in effect, be establishing a gold standard of sustainability here that we can use in the years to come in other watersheds and lakes as well.

The protection and restoration of Lake Simcoe is a long-term undertaking, but it must be done. It's our responsibility to ensure that Ontarians can continue to enjoy and benefit from this beautiful water for generations to come.

In closing, Speaker, I just want to read you some comments that were made by some of the people who have been very interested in this lake for many, many years. Annabel Slaight, for example, one of the co-founders of the Ladies of the Lake, said, when the bill was introduced, "The introduction of this act demonstrates the province hears Lake Simcoe's cries for help. Now, we need to come together to help this wonderful lake, the lands that flow into it and the people who live here to ensure all become in sync environmentally."

Dr. Rick Smith, executive director of Environmental Defence, said the following when this bill was intro-

duced: "A new day is dawning for Lake Simcoe. This act is very positive, and we look forward to working with the government over the next nine months to make the forthcoming protection plan as strong as possible."

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Robert Eisenberg, the founding chair of the Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition, said the following when the bill was first introduced in June: "The Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition was created specifically to bring people and government together to work on solutions for our ailing lake. We have done it, and today I couldn't be more proud of both the province and the citizens of Lake Simcoe."

Don Pearson, general manager for Conservation Ontario, had this to say: "We are pleased that the Ontario government has recognized the importance of integrated watershed planning to ensure sustainable development within the Lake Simcoe watershed. This approach takes into consideration all the activities taking place on the land that may impact the lake itself."

"The provision for watershed protection plans within the proposed Lake Simcoe act is an important step forward in Ontario and is welcomed by the conservation authorities as they and their municipal partners grapple with the challenges of growth and environmental protection."

Finally, just one further comment by Roger Anderson, regional chair for the regional municipality of Durham—what did he have to say? He said that, that "Durham region has already invested in improving the health of Lake Simcoe by reducing the phosphorous discharge from our water pollution control plants. We look forward to development of a plan that will address the many other challenges in protecting the lake."

That is precisely what we intend to do with the Lake Simcoe Protection Act. We need this act passed in this House as expeditiously as possible, with support, hopefully, from all the members of this House, and then get on with the plan that will benefit not only the people in the Lake Simcoe area but all of the people of Ontario for many generations to come.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. The member for Oakville.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure today to join the Minister of the Environment in the debate for second reading of Bill 99. As PA to the minister, obviously, I'm proud to speak in support of this proposed legislation that protects both Lake Simcoe and its watershed.

I had the opportunity over the summer to do a two-day tour of the area. It certainly is an area that I have travelled through numerous times in the past, but this provided an opportunity to get into some of the smaller areas, into the areas that typically people would not visit unless they lived there. We went through the Holland Marsh. We went through the town of Bradford. We took a look at the canal system down there. We paid a visit to the Lake Simcoe conservation area, we met with the Ladies of the Lake, and we met with some of the senior management at the city of Barrie. All were excited about

this proposal. All were very, very complimentary about this piece of proposed legislation and really want to see this move ahead.

Over 200 years now of human activity around the lake has had a devastating effect on both the lake and the watershed that surrounds it. The natural landscape of the area, I think anybody can see, has been changed in a very dramatic way and new land uses are in place. For example, you see evolving agricultural uses, more intense urbanization. We all know that farmers feed our cities. We know that any area that's got the beauty that this area has will attract people who want to live there, so we certainly should anticipate that the Lake Simcoe area will become home to more people in the future simply because it's a beautiful place to live. But there's no question that some of the human activities are causing excessive amounts of phosphorus to enter the lake and we're seeing a degradation of the water quality as a result of that. Such areas as the cold water fishery are starting to be impacted, we're seeing algae blooms—the water clarity issue obviously is something that needs to be addressed—and you're seeing changes in the levels of dissolved oxygen in the lake.

The experts, based on all those findings, are telling us that we need to act immediately to protect Lake Simcoe, the land, the rivers, the streams, the tributaries and the wetlands that surround the lake and that connect the two. They say that if we don't act, the impact of current activities, the impact of future growth and the emerging threats such as new invasive species and climate change, could take Lake Simcoe past the tipping point, past the point of no return. I don't think there's anybody in this House, I don't think there's anybody out in the public, and I don't think there's anybody in the scientific community who wants to see that happen.

If passed, the piece of proposed legislation we have before us, the Lake Simcoe Protection Act, would make the difference, in my opinion, that's really needed in this regard. It allows the province to create the Lake Simcoe protection plan, and that becomes the road map for action to make the improvements that we've talked about.

If passed, it would allow the province to regulate activities on land that's near shorelines, on tributaries, and, as I talked about before, the wetlands. All that will be done in an effort to improve and protect water quality. It would also allow the province to evaluate a water quality trading and offsetting program for phosphorus and other pollutants. It's an innovative approach to phosphorus reduction and it's being used in some other jurisdictions. What we're doing right now is investigating water quality trading as a possibility, and we'll be providing the authority for it, but the authority would only be used if it proves to be the right approach under the circumstance.

Essentially, a water quality trading and offsetting program would set a limit on pollutants. Each individual source—for example, each individual or municipal sewage treatment plant—would be able to discharge only a certain amount of phosphorus within that limit, and no

more. To help reduce output to the allotted level, the program could offer each source the option of buying or trading credits from other regulated sources of phosphorus. For instance, a company could buy credits from other regulated sources while it takes the time it needs to plan and upgrade its own sewage treatment infrastructure. Or, since upgrading infrastructure can certainly cost a lot of money for sometimes relatively small improvements in phosphorus reduction, the company could then choose instead to purchase offsets by paying for activities that reduce phosphorus from unregulated sources in the same watershed. As I said before, this is being used in other jurisdictions. Two states come to mind: the state of Pennsylvania and the state of Connecticut. And in Ontario, we actually have a pilot program ourselves, a phosphorous offsetting program that's currently being tested in the South Nation River watershed.

Over the past few months, our government has been studying water quality trading and offsetting as a potential tool to reduce the level of phosphorus in Lake Simcoe. If the act is passed, and, as I said before, if we're satisfied that it's the right tool in the circumstance, we could develop a regulation that sets out the rules that would apply. We would also consult on how best to implement the program.

Over the past 20 years, many parties have been involved in efforts to preserve and protect Lake Simcoe. The Lake Simcoe environmental management strategy, as many of the members who are here today know, has been a voluntary partnership that comprises all three levels of government, the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority, many agricultural organizations, and First Nations. Together, we have led many successful projects to improve water quality within the watershed, within the ecosystem. They include ecosystem planning, agricultural studies, urban studies, monitoring studies, scientific studies, as well as a large degree of public education and outreach.

Bill 99, as it's proposed, respects the history of this partnership and also proposes a very similar partnership approach to implementing the protection plan. If passed, the proposed act would establish a governance structure that includes two advisory committees, a coordinating committee of watershed representatives, and a separate science committee. These committees could work together, share information, oversee the plan's implementation, and report periodically to the Minister of the Environment on the progress they are making. The structure is based on a recommendation that has come out of the Lake Simcoe environmental management strategy working group, but partnerships could also continue in a number of other ways.

About 47% of the Lake Simcoe watershed is used currently for agricultural purposes. The estimate is that there are currently about 2,000 farms in the watershed. The farming community itself has already implemented well over 300 environmental improvement projects to help protect the lake. They include projects to restrict

livestock access to waterways, eliminate contaminated runoff from manure, and control erosion. As you also know, Speaker, farmers apply phosphorus to the lands to promote and sustain crop growth and to improve quality where the soil does not have enough of that nutrient. They're working hard to reduce the amount of phosphorus that moves off their farms into Lake Simcoe and its tributaries, and to date they're achieving very good results.

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Part of our government's \$20-million funding commitment to protect Lake Simcoe will go directly towards helping farmers with the cost of agricultural improvements and best practices. These include measures to further reduce the movement of phosphorus from the farm property into the watershed and into the tributaries. Local municipalities have also taken major steps to help protect the Lake Simcoe watershed, which in fact crosses 23 separate municipal boundaries. Projects to date include replacing and retrofitting septic systems, controlling stream bank erosion, regular inspections of sewage treatment plants and the improvement of stormwater management.

If passed, Bill 99, as proposed, would take this a step further. It would call for municipalities in the watershed to take a greener, more sustainable approach throughout their own communities. We want to avoid adding to the problems that already face Lake Simcoe. Therefore, the proposed plan would ask that new developments be as green as possible and that municipalities find ways to fund and to green existing developments. For example, if a plan calls for vegetative buffers around shorelines and wetlands, municipalities in the watershed would be required to implement that policy when approving new developments in their own jurisdictions.

I do want to recognize that many developers are already leaders in Ontario in building green, LEED-certified home developments in the Lake Simcoe area, and right across the province. When we talk about Lake Simcoe these days, we talk a lot about phosphorus and we talk about trying to reduce those phosphorus levels because it's such an important indicator of the health of the lake.

However, if Bill 99 is passed, the long-range strategy would also address other concerns. We've seen invasive species enter the lake. We've seen the zebra mussel come in, or the round goby, and they're considered by scientists to be a very grave threat to Lake Simcoe. If they're left unchecked, these invaders will compete with native species and wildlife and unbalance the natural ecosystem that exists.

Climate change is another concern. In 2001, for the first time in over 50 years, Lake Simcoe did not freeze over. The impact on the ice fishing industry was awful. The ice fishing industry in fact suffered its worst year in history. Local businesses were also affected.

Our government's developed a comprehensive plan to reduce greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change, but the effects are already here with us here

today. We need a plan for how to adapt and to respond to this challenge. The proposed plan would address the impacts of recreation and tourism business. Tourism and recreation pump millions of dollars into the Lake Simcoe economy, and this plan would encourage sustainable tourism. Boating, for example, can stress the natural environment through either refuelling leaks, bilge water discharge in the lake, and our plan would look at ways to reduce these types of impacts.

There is a strong agreement on the need to develop a comprehensive, long-term, science-based plan to protect and restore Lake Simcoe and its watershed. If Bill 99 is passed as proposed, it would allow us to develop this plan and take the necessary steps forward. The proposed act is important to the environmental health of Lake Simcoe, its watershed and its people, as well as to our province as a whole, our people and our future. I sincerely hope that all members of the House will offer their support for this piece of legislation. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments? The member for Oshawa.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I very much appreciate the opportunity. Lake Simcoe is a very important area. It's very important to many people in the province of Ontario with a strong passion about it.

There is a couple things on there that the minister mentioned about activities that take place on the lake and how to curb some of those things. We have to think outside of the box and some of things are two-stroke motors, and the utilization of two-stroke motors. For example, the average two-stroke motor, the older one, will contribute as much as 25% of its fuel consumption back into the lake. It wasn't a problem once upon a time, and the reason was because the fuel would sit on the top and then evaporate into the air—which is another problem, but it didn't affect the water. The difficulty now is the oxidizing agents found inside the fuel will actually separate—it's heavier than the water—and go to the bottom. They're carcinogenic. So your deep-water cisco in Lake Simcoe—or for those who don't know the deep-water cisco, the herring—are being directly affected because of the oxidizing agents found in fuels. If you look at some of the opportunities, maybe we should only have ethanol as one of the areas that could be utilized as an oxidizing agent for any of the fuel service places that sell the boats in that area; that would help out.

Some of the other areas the PA mentioned were farming areas and things like that. What takes place when the farmers realize that the waterfront becomes far more—how will I say it—financially advantageous for them to sell off those lots?

If you look at lot size and the development of lot size, if you limit the lot size—now, a lot of them go to 100-foot frontage—the difficulty is, everybody wants their pristine beach and everything else, but what you do with those smaller lot sizes is you reduce the habitat and the area where the bulrushes come in and cleanse the water and things like that. If you minimize the lot size to about 200 feet per lot on a frontage, what you'll do is decrease

the number of individuals utilizing or contributing back into that area through grey water or through any other septic systems and things like that, and reduce the impact on it. You never know what the breaking point or the stress point is going to be on a lake, but we have to start somewhere and it's a good spot to lead by example with Lake Simcoe.

Mr. Mike Colle: I really appreciate the comments made by the member from Oshawa—I think they're very good suggestions—and also the PA and the minister. This is a lake that's dear and near to a lot of us.

I can remember as a young boy going up to De La Salle Camp next door there at the bottom of Jackson's Point. In fact, at one time, there was even an electric streetcar that ran up to the metro road, to Lake Simcoe from north Toronto, so working families could go there. So it has always been a lake where ordinary people could go and spend a weekend, and it was always very close.

But because it's also very close, the problem is that there has been a by-product of urban sprawl that has gone into the Lake Simcoe watershed area. Subsequently, a lot of the feeder streams and springs that go into Lake Simcoe have been paved over, have basically been made redundant, and a lot of people haven't taken the long-term care. I was there this summer again, down at the bottom. I was able to go on Snake Island, which is owned by the Chippewas of Georgina. The interesting thing is they don't allow any cars on Snake Island; it's all pedestrian. I think those types of things help, because it's almost too successful a lake. Everybody can get there; subsequently, the success means overpopulation.

The other danger to the whole area is just these mega cottages. You see people building these cottages that are about 5,000 square feet, with every appliance. If you come to a lake, you don't have to replicate what you have in the city. If we all took that attitude, we also could help. Again, I support this, and I hope it passes.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to add some comments on Bill 99, An Act to protect and restore the ecological health of the Lake Simcoe watershed and to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act. I'd like to, in commenting on the minister's and parliamentary assistant's speech, bring up a related topic to do with some water system in the Parry Sound-Muskoka area, and that is Sturgeon Bay, which is located just north of Pointe au Baril on Georgian Bay. I recently received a letter from the president of the Sturgeon Bay Pointe au Baril Ratepayers Association in which he attached an e-mail that he had sent to Minister Gerretsen with regard to a request for assistance with regard to the current resolution to remediate the situation on Sturgeon Bay. The situation on Sturgeon Bay is that they've had problems with blue-green algae blooms that are caused by phosphorus, so sort of similar to some of the challenges on Lake Simcoe. Mr. Stephen Saddler, the president, notes he has heard no response from Mr. Gerretsen.

He goes on in his letter to Minister Gerretsen to do with the blue-green algae. He notes that the association has been working with the Sturgeon Bay Water Quality

Action Committee and with the municipality of Archipelago, that they came up with what may be the solution, which is a product called Phoslock, and notes that it was funded on Lake Simcoe to the tune of, according to his letter, \$250,000. So the question is—"We are asking for the same government resolve to assist our situation on Sturgeon Bay. Members of the water quality action committee have long called our bay 'the canary in the coal mine,' a perfect location to test the efficacy of the Phoslock product."

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So basically he's asking for the same treatment for Sturgeon Bay in Parry Sound-Muskoka that is happening on Lake Simcoe.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Madam Speaker, I think it's useful that we have this bill before us. I want to congratulate the residents around Lake Simcoe and the environmental groups that have been working on these issues for many years for having applied pressure and brought this issue to the fore and—what can I say?—carried this current government to the point where they're willing to put this act before us.

I'm concerned—and I'll have a chance to enlarge on that when my turn comes to debate—that although this act is a useful tool, there is a larger context still not being adequately addressed by this government. There are residents and environmental groups that have been caught up in lawsuits because they tried to protect this lake from resort development that was oversized, that was going to have a negative impact on water quality. Those people have been hung out there to dry. They are scrambling to find the money to defend themselves. In fact, given what has been said here by the minister and his parliamentary assistant, they should be getting support from this government because they took the initiative to protect that lake. They took the risks and now they're getting the heat. They shouldn't be getting the heat. The government should have stepped in earlier to protect the lake and brought this act in to extend the work they were going to do, not simply put in the act after folks have been put in jeopardy by taking the initiative that they took.

The other concern I have, obviously, is that in this act the ability of municipalities to impose a higher or stricter standard to protect the lake is cut out, the same problem we had with the pesticides bylaw. A ceiling has been put on municipal action, not a floor. Frankly, that means that in the future, the ability for innovative things to be done is going to be restricted. That's a problem.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Response?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to hear some of the sentiments that are being expressed on both sides of the House. It's a start, I hope, of a co-operative effort. I think if we work on this together, we can do something very significant.

The exciting part of this, to me, is that sometimes you look at some of the environmental impact that humans

have had around the planet, you look at the scale of that impact and you look at what we've done to the Great Lakes, or you take a look at what we've done to the atmosphere or you take a look at what we've done to certain species, and you wonder if you can ever turn that around. You look at the problems and you think, "Those problems are so big; I wonder if I'm going to see those changes in my lifetime," even if we start working on it now.

But it's different: Lake Simcoe has a scale to it that you can look at Lake Simcoe, and I can imagine Lake Simcoe being restored to the condition it should be in in my lifetime, if we get on that. That is much different than many of the other more monumental tasks that we're facing. Climate change, I think, is probably going to be solved over a number of generations into the future. But when you look at the size of Lake Simcoe, and you look at the co-operative effort—when I did the tour up there with my executive assistant, Tania Barile, the people that we met—it didn't matter what side of the issue they were on, whether they were very strong pro-environmental, whether they were very strong pro-business or from municipalities, there was a willingness to work together, a willingness to move forward on this issue. I think it speaks volumes about the way that we're starting to treat environmental issues as a society. If you take the partisan nature out of the argument, out of the debate, I think as a society we're starting to come to grips with the impact that some of the environmental damage has had to our lifestyle and could potentially have to our children's lifestyle. I really appreciated what I heard from the other side of the House today and I'm looking forward to this bill passing and to moving ahead.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I welcome the opportunity to debate Bill 99, the Lake Simcoe Protection Act. I'll be sharing my time with Garfield Dunlop, MPP for Simcoe North. Garfield is the MPP who introduced the idea in the House of having this legislation in the first place. That proposed legislation was a private member's resolution, and it passed unanimously in this House in November 2006.

Garfield has maybe 60 miles of shoreline along Lake Simcoe. I do know that Julia Munro, our member for York-Simcoe, has about 60 miles of shoreline in her riding as well. I understand that it partly encompasses the Holland Marsh and Bradford Marsh area. A number of other MPPs on the opposition side have done some work on this and have part of their jurisdictions within the Lake Simcoe watershed.

It's important, when we talk about this, to extend our discussion beyond the lake itself. We do have to talk about the watershed. To their credit, the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority is based on a watershed jurisdiction, as are all the conservation authorities across the province of Ontario; they're probably among the few organizations anywhere that are based on watersheds. Perhaps the Tennessee Valley Authority would be another example of a watershed-based jurisdiction.

Other members who worked on this over the years: Jim Wilson, Simcoe–Grey; and Frank Klees, Newmarket–Aurora; Kawartha Highlands—part of that area is in the northeast portion of the watershed for the lake, an area covered by Laurie Scott, the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock; and of course, a former member of this Legislature, Joe Tascona, first talked to me about the concerns he had with Lake Simcoe and then presented a number of ideas of what could be done to rectify some of those problems. Right off the bat, I do want to recognize the good work and research that was done by the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority and more specifically, an organization created by them, referred to as LSEMS, the Lake Simcoe environment management strategy.

I do get the impression that the present Ontario government has basically lifted a lot of the good work done by LSEMS, and there's nothing wrong with that. They've tweaked it a bit, and they've now brought it forward as their own legislation. I do see as well where this government has borrowed heavily, to their credit, from the work of Garfield Dunlop and, as I mentioned, Joe Tascona, and policy put forward by John Tory. Imitation is a form of flattery, and that's fine, because what we're talking about today and will be, probably over the rest of this year and perhaps longer, unless this bill gets rammed through, is all about cleaning up the lake and improving that broader geographic area, that watershed.

I do recommend to all concerned to read these reports that have come out of not only the conservation authority but from the LSEMS organization. They apply not only to the lake but to Barrie and Orillia; they apply to the broader watershed area, the various streams, rivers and creeks that empty into the lake. They encompass that broader area. We've made mention of Holland Marsh, part of the Durham region, part of the Kawartha Lakes.

Obviously, the whole watershed is under the jurisdiction of the Lake Simcoe conservation authority. That area—I find this really hard to believe—is now home to 350,000 people, and they predict that in the next 25 years, another quarter of a million people will be coming to the Lake Simcoe area. I think that many of us should be concerned. We could pass this legislation, we can bring in regulations and implement certain measures and spend a bit of money, but I really have concerns about how that watershed and the lake itself and its various streams and rivers can accommodate another quarter of a million people.

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Whether we're from the area or not, visit the area or have cottages there, many, many of us have an interest in Lake Simcoe. There's quite a history, certainly, since the arrival of European settlers and obviously several thousand years of human habitation before that. My mother-in-law, Joan, was a Cameron from Orillia. On my wife's side we have family living in Barrie. My great grandmother Fanny Bemister lived in Beaverton. The Bemisters had a pottery business there. They arrived in 1839, I think it was from Christchurch, England, and set

up a pottery. Beaverton is known for its local clay, which also supported a tile establishment and a brickyard.

I feel that as we debate this—and much of the data available are biological or scientific data—we can learn from the past with respect to this particular part of North America, not in just the Beaverton and Orillia area but the broader area and some of the significant role it has played in North America, essentially. I do suggest reading those LSEMS reports, but don't stop there. Keep in mind that there is quite a varied and colourful history in the area. I think of the fur trade and the lumber trade. I think of the 200-plus years of farming, which continues to flourish today, certainly in the Halton marsh area, and of the advent of the railroad. I think Stephen Leacock made mention that they were proud of that railroad that came to Orillia. Of course, he referred to it as Mariposa. I don't think it stopped there, but they were very proud of the railroad and the fact that there was a railroad in the neighbourhood. There's Yonge Street—transportation corridors that superseded the original canoe routes and the trails in the area. There was the shipping of ice from Lake Simcoe to Toronto and the shipping of tourists and cottagers from Toronto back up to Lake Simcoe. Again, there's quite a history there, and the history of vacationing and tourism and cottagers goes back at least 100 years.

For those in the House, and given our line of work, I'd recommend reading a book called *All for a Beaver Hat*. It's a history of early Simcoe county, written by the Honourable Ernest C. Drury about his native county. E.C. Drury's father was minister for agriculture in one of the Mowat administrations, and following World War I, E.C. Drury served Ontario as Prime Minister. The foreword to the book was written by Leslie Frost, also a native of Simcoe county and former Premier of Ontario.

As for books, I'd be remiss if I did not mention Lake Simcoe area resident Mazo de la Roche and her 16 novels that make up the famous Jalna series, translated into dozens of languages. Much of this work was used for film, television production and screenplays. Her stories—I think I've read maybe one of them—are based on a fictional matriarchal family. In fact, Mazo de la Roche led a life of fiction herself, not only through her books but her life itself, as I understand. I'm told she actually modelled part of her work on a visit to my mom's family farm south of the town of Simcoe in my riding, not to be confused with Lake Simcoe, and as well as used other families who had cottages up in the area of the lake. She also used as a model—I was told this today—Jane Gordon, a great-aunt of Ted Chudleigh, our member for Halton.

Of course, there's Stephen Butler Leacock, of Mariposa Belle fame. In the early 1900s, more people had heard of Stephen Leacock than had heard of Canada. They say that between 1915 and 1925, Leacock was the most popular humorist in the English-speaking world. During the summer months, Leacock lived at Old Brewery Bay in Orillia, on the lake. He was also raised in that area. That cottage is now a museum and a national historic site.

It was the local barber, Jefferson Short, who provided a lot of the material for Leacock for his stories. One that comes to mind is *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*, which was written in 1912, and as many of us know, he called that little town Mariposa—thinly disguised; that was Orillia. I'd like to quote from this particular book. The reason I say this is because it gives us an insight—we're going back 100 years through the eyes of a writer—of what the lake looked like then:

"In point of geography the lake is called Lake Wissanotti and the river running out of it the Ossawippi, just as the main street of Mariposa is called Missinaba Street and the county Missinaba County. But these names do not really matter. Nobody uses them. People simply speak of the 'lake' and the 'river' and the 'main street.'"

There's another section in this book—again, the area 100 years ago:

"After the winter, the snow melts and the ice goes out of the lake, the sun shines high and the shanty-men come down from the lumber woods and lie round drunk on the sidewalk outside of Smith's Hotel"—again, a fictional name for probably a well-known hotel of its day—"and that's spring time. Mariposa is then a fierce, dangerous lumber town, calculated to terrorize the soul of a new-comer who does not understand that this also is only an appearance and that presently the rough-looking shanty-men will change their clothes and turn back again into farmers.

"Then the sun shines warmer and the maple trees come out and Lawyer Macartney puts on his tennis trousers, and that's summer time. The little town changes to a sort of summer resort. There are visitors up from the city. Every one of the seven cottages along the lake is full."

Seven cottages—many of us here know the Simcoe area; today, how many cottages do we have along Lake Simcoe? Obviously, more than seven. The cottages are on septic systems and holding tanks and municipal waste disposal systems, all of relevance for the phosphorus loading that we have been hearing a discussion of today and which we will be discussing over the coming months as we debate Bill 99.

So, as we conduct this provincial debate, these deliberations on the proposed Lake Simcoe Protection Act, we might well be advised to perhaps take a Leacockian approach, to perhaps work in the world of fiction on occasion, and I have seen this from legislation coming across the way. I know Big Bay Point was mentioned by the third party. Oftentimes this government and people involved may not want to name names or places; they may wish to make up a fictional world, as was done by Mazo de la Roche and as was done by Stephen Butler Leacock. I find politicians sometimes can be good at working in a fictional world.

1430

Take Big Bay Point, for example. You can read about the lawsuits and the bitter feud between the cottagers and the developers. This was just mentioned earlier in one of the two-minute hits, and anyone who is interested in

getting one journalist's take on that particular story after the last several years should take a look at last month's issue of *Toronto Life* magazine. There's an article by Paul Wilson, and it's titled "The Battle Over Lake Simcoe." Or go back a number of years in time and pick up a book titled *Secrets of the Lakes*, written by Monica Frim. In Frim's book, we are told that a settler, Francis Hewson, came from Ireland to settle on 500 acres at Big Bay Point. This was in 1918; he settled at the entrance of Kempenfelt Bay. At that time, that was the main route across the lake past that point, and during his clearing of the land and farming in that area, he sheltered many travellers, both native and non-native. Interestingly, he also put up for the night Sir John Franklin—this was in 1825—who was on his way to the Arctic.

Big Bay Point, along that bay—farming was very tough in that area. The population remained very, very sparse up until the late 1800s. In 1887, a person by the name of Isaac Robinson opened the two-storey Robinson House Hotel. He added a dock and he had his own steamer called *The Conqueror*. Shortly afterwards, competition came along. Another, much larger establishment was built, the Big Bay Point Hotel, built on Big Bay Point. The whole area at that time blossomed as a vacation destination.

Fast-forward 120 years to the Big Bay Point of today. We're told in that article in *Toronto Life* that the battle over Lake Simcoe, with \$255 million in lawsuits, has now become, or did become, the mother of all development wars, a war described as one of the messiest and one of the most acrimonious in recent history. Apart from that—and I know that has been, regrettably, a compelling issue for many, especially people living in that area, people either trying to protect what they have or people trying to move forward with development. It is unfortunate when we get down to that kind of approach using lawsuits. But I would like to pull back and take a look at the larger picture.

A year ago July, our leader, John Tory, announced that an Ontario PC government would move quickly to clean up Lake Simcoe. During that announcement, he was joined by Garfield Dunlop from Simcoe North; Jim Wilson from Simcoe-Grey; Julia Munro from York North; and also MPP Joe Tascona, who at that time represented the riding of Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford. As Mr. Tory stated last year, and I'll just quote:

"Dalton McGuinty has turned his back on the deteriorating health of this invaluable natural and recreational resource for" the past "four years. In contrast, a John Tory government will move quickly to ensure the province plays a greater role in restoring the lake's ecological health."

And as we know, increased levels of phosphorus in the lake from both urban and rural sources have resulted in a significant disruption of the lake's ecosystem and truly are threatening its sustainability. Of course, those living nearby are affected by this issue. They care deeply about the health of the lake. They've banded together. They have launched a number of education programs, infor-

mation programs, advocacy. They've conducted fund-raising. Groups I've mentioned today—the Ladies of the Lake, of calendar fame, and The Wave—have done a tremendous amount of work raising awareness beyond the Simcoe area with respect to not only the problems—the deterioration of that ecosystem not only within the lake but within the watershed—but also coming up with some solutions.

For many, as I said earlier, Lake Simcoe is seen as an invaluable natural and recreational resource. I'd just to go back in time a little further, if I may—again, who has accurate data? We understand that with the retreat of the glaciers, the glacial melt created both Lake Couchiching and Lake Simcoe 5,000 or 10,000 years ago. As the ice retreated, the area would have been dominated, in my view—we talk about very large animals like the pre-glacial mastodon, the mammoth; we read of giant beaver, grizzly bear. Then, 10,000 to 11,000 years ago, human beings arrived—obviously, they didn't come up from Toronto at that time; I don't know what the migration routes would have been. And 2,000 years ago, we have more clear-cut evidence of two groups who lived in the Lake Simcoe area, the Algonquin and the Iroquois. Actually, from what we read, the hostilities between those two groups—the kind of warfare they were involved in—would probably make the goings-on and the lawsuits at Big Bay Point over the past several years look like a Teddy bears' picnic, in my opinion.

We all know that the lake is part of the Trent-Severn waterway, which links Lake Ontario through Lake Simcoe up to Georgian Bay. Lake Simcoe is the largest lake in southern Ontario, apart from the Great Lakes. Really, the significance as far as fishing and boating and travel—I travelled the Trent-Severn waterway in 1959 with my father, and of course we had to cross Lake Simcoe. A very, very heavy fog set in. At that time, as I recall, our compass went the wrong way on us, and we had a bit of a feeling that night for just how large that lake is, because we had no direction to get across.

Beyond boating, fishing and recreational sports, the lake provides safe drinking water for five communities, but also receives waste water from 14 sewage treatment facilities, which obviously includes phosphorus, as mentioned. What else? There's birth control medication. What else would be flowing into that lake and through the watershed—as mentioned, a watershed that's home to 350,000 people, and there's another 250,000 on the way. That's an awful lot of people living on land that all eventually drains into Lake Simcoe.

I would like to digress a bit, in talking about the sewage, albeit so-called treated sewage, that eventually does find itself in Lake Simcoe. I was talking to a fellow just the other day—I visited Phoenix, Arizona. All waste water from Phoenix—first of all, they use it as cooling water in a nearby nuclear plant. But after that, they use that water for irrigation. Again, if you are living in the Arizona desert you have no choice: You take water very, very seriously. I suggest to this House that we in Ontario, other than a few droughts in the last several years, have

essentially, in many ways, had more water than we could use, say, over the 40 years after the war. We do have to take a look at some other options beyond using the lake to receive waste water from 350,000 people plus another 250,000.

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I'm concerned about population growth. There are some dramatic figures here, based on municipal boundaries. Oftentimes, material we read is not based on the watershed boundaries; it's based on municipal boundaries. Even the newly created greenbelt boundaries don't follow the watershed boundaries. That really flies in the face of even using the term "greenbelt." There are several greenbelt boundaries that intersect this particular watershed.

I only have data based on municipal boundaries. Durham region is expected to grow from 530,000 people now to 960,000; York region, 760,000 people today, going toward 1.5 million; even Simcoe county—Barrie, Orillia—is growing from 392,000 to 667,000. Again, as population rises, so do the phosphorus levels, and as phosphorus rises, it would eliminate any progress that may have been made over the past few years. Much of the decisions around population growth are really dependent on future municipal decisions and also, obviously, federal government decisions based on immigration, for that matter.

Regrettably, we see the ill health of Lake Simcoe, a lake that is failing in part because of population growth, a particular mix of land use activities and urbanization, which contribute large amounts of nutrients and sediment. But there is an opportunity. I think that with this legislation, we now have before us an opportunity for not only a case study but perhaps a pilot project to just see what we can do in this small part of North America with respect to overpopulation, overuse, overconsumption and pollution. It remains to be seen whether this government, and this legislation in particular, will actually accomplish anything.

There are other pressures in addition to growth in population. Invasive species—exotic species like the zebra mussel—are in Lake Simcoe, and there are others. I know that Lake Nipigon has the spiny water flea; I'm assuming it's in Lake Simcoe. We're looking at a lake that is one of the most intensively fished lakes in Ontario. We know that phosphorus is a problem, but we have to think beyond just the water and the lake. We have to think about the whole watershed, the land and the air as well.

It is home to a number of provincially significant wetlands, a fair bit of forest cover, woodlots and, of course, specialty crop areas—I think of the onions and lettuce grown in the Holland Marsh. There is identification of 50 different species of mammals, 141 species of birds, 36 amphibian-reptile species and, of course, as in most of Ontario, a number of species that are at risk.

Back to phosphorus: High levels of phosphorus feed the excess growth of algae-type plants in the lake and, obviously, overgrowth of weeds. Algae and microscopic

animals feed and eventually die and sink to the deep waters of the lake, decompose and consume oxygen all the while. Again, there's pressure on the fishery. Whitefish, lake trout and herring were mentioned. There's pressure on perch and other species for which Lake Simcoe is famous for ice fishing, and even pressure on carp.

I understand that this summer, there was a very significant die-off of carp in the Lake Simcoe area.

Some of the data: Phosphorous levels in the 1800s sat at around 32 tonnes a year. In the 1990s, they increased dramatically to 100 tonnes a year. The levels have decreased somewhat to about 67 tonnes a year. That was between 1998 and 2004, and again, due to work by many people, the collaborative efforts of the province, the federal government, the community, industry and local individuals. But we do know that the present Minister of the Environment has put in place measures that will allow these phosphorous levels to continue to increase. Despite being lower than historically documented, the levels today still need to be addressed, particularly in areas like Cook's Bay and Kempenfelt Bay, the bay adjacent to Big Bay Point. Again, I understand that Kempenfelt Bay has some good potential for a lake trout fishery.

There are other issues. There are yet more issues facing the lake: increased levels of chloride; contaminants in sport fish; the degraded aquatic habitats not only in Lake Simcoe but also in its tributaries, the rivers and the streams; increased water temperature; hardening of the shoreline; stream channel alterations; in-stream obstructions; changes in stream hydrology; removal of stream bank vegetation—invariably, this happens when somebody builds a cottage. We see it as we travel the rivers and the lakes. They cut down the brush, they cut the weeds, they cut down the trees and they set up a lawn. Sometimes they even remove rocks, and they will mow grass right down to the water's edge. That has a dramatic impact on the health of the lake.

I will say that over the past 17 years, efforts have been there to protect the lake and to bring it along in a better way. I mention again LSEMS, the Lake Simcoe environmental management group. They were formed in 1990. They were created by the Lake Simcoe conservation authority. I want to mention again that there are some excellent reports coming out of these organizations. I ask people who are working on the file to take a look at those reports.

Improving Lake Simcoe is a long-term venture. It took us many years to get where we are today, but there are some short-term objectives that we can all work on: obviously, reducing phosphorous load; reducing pollutants—chloride, as I've mentioned, and bacteria; maintaining water quality. We have to protect, we have to rehabilitate areas—the water recharge areas; forested or other buffer areas along shorelines are in order and have to be brought back for fish habitat and for wildlife habitat.

But don't focus just on the lake. Think of the marshes, the bogs, the fens and the wetlands upstream from the

lake itself. Short-term goals identified by the LSEMS group: reducing beach closures, and as this legislation indicates, a restoration of that cold-water fishery.

LSEMS also proposed a governance model for the lake, a collaborative process to pull together the various interests that we know of: the cottagers, the developers, industry, agriculture, individual citizens and, of course, government. I agree. I feel that we need something to pull all this together, to pull together the intent of the various pieces of even just the provincial legislation that can be applied to this particular area. LSEMS indicates that there is a need for better coordination, better coordination of the science itself and the research, better coordination of remediation—there has to be an action plan, and it has to be resourced appropriately—better coordination of communications, better coordination of education concerning not only the lake but also its watershed. They've laid out a number of principles. If there was a future governance model to be developed, they favour a combined approach, expanded to include the public along with industry and government. It has to focus on the needs of the lake. It requires consultation; it requires information-sharing.

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Now, I have not been to a government-sponsored Lake Simcoe meeting. I hope there are some planned this fall and this winter. As far as governance, we have to avoid duplication and overlap. It will require sustainable and reliable funding. Lake Simcoe was not mentioned in this year's budget. I do wish to point that out. Governance has to be based on strong science and monitoring. We do have to build on the success of the past. We have some frameworks, and obviously this bill, if it does receive assent, will provide a framework, but we can work, obviously, with the Nutrient Management Act of 2002, the provincial policy statement in 2005, the Clean Water Act and the Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act in 2007.

I'll just wrap up briefly. I do wish to turn the remaining time over to Mr. Dunlop. I did mention John Tory's announcement a year ago last July. He presented an eight-point plan for Lake Simcoe: invest \$12 million over the next two years, match the support of the federal government and support a Lake Simcoe action fund to clean up the lake; develop a new governance structure working with the stakeholders that I just mentioned; create a Lake Simcoe charter; increase and streamline funding for water and waste water infrastructure for projects impacting Lake Simcoe; end the dumping of primary sewage into our water; hire more conservation officers to protect the lake and rebuild the Ministry of Natural Resources so it can better maintain the health of the lake; conserve more green space with a land conservation challenge fund—again, it would work well in areas like Lake Simcoe; and invest in better GO train service to the Lake Simcoe area to reduce pollution, smog and the impacts of climate change, which all threaten the health of the lake.

I see in the government's plan that they are building on the work that has been done by Garfield Dunlop. I see

a plan here that builds on the proposals put forward by John Tory last year. My hope is that the members opposite and this government take the work of LSEMS and the conservation authority seriously and continue to work from the data, not only the scientific data but also the historical data. Thank you very much, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. The member from Simcoe North.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you to my colleague Mr. Barrett, our environmental critic, for allowing me to use a bit of the time in the leadoff. I'm happy to speak to Bill 99, proud to speak to Bill 99, An Act to protect and restore the ecological health of the Lake Simcoe watershed and to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act in respect of water quality trading. This bill follows on a lot of legislation that has been passed in this House in the past, legislation like the Niagara Escarpment act, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, the greenbelt legislation. All this legislation was provincially driven and dealt with large areas that were under threat.

I have a little over 100 kilometres of shoreline on Lake Simcoe in the riding of Simcoe North. Basically it goes from the Talbot River over in the Gamebridge area right around to the city limits of Barrie. I can tell you that I spend many days throughout the course of the summer months in particular listening to cottage associations, ratepayer associations, from all different parts of the community—whether it's in Ramara township, Oro-Medonte, around the city of Orillia—all people who have been very, very concerned for a number of years about water quality, and water quality in Lake Simcoe.

I really want to thank some people, because I think there are some key people who have driven this above and beyond government, and above and beyond the conservation authority. I know today in the House, in the west gallery, we have Linda Wells from Campaign Lake Simcoe, and Claire Malcolmson from Environmental Defence.

For a long time, Campaign Lake Simcoe were out there by themselves. They kept driving the story and the issue of water quality in Lake Simcoe. There is even head-butting between the conservation authorities and government and municipalities about costs etc. So I give them so much credit for being the driving force behind it. Behind that are the Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition, Environmental Defence with Dr. Rick Smith, and Ontario Nature with Wendy Francis.

I had met with a number of these people. Claire Malcolmson from Environmental Defence has been the lead here at Queen's Park for about the last three years on the Lake Simcoe Protection Act and making sure we actually move this ahead. I know she's lobbied all of the different governments and all of the different parties. I give them all a lot of credit.

The Ladies of the Lake was briefly mentioned a few times today under the leadership of Annabel Slaight. They started out with the sale of the 2006 calendar which they were promoting—these ladies dressed in costume in different scenic photos around the lake. And I believe—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Are you a part of it?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: No, I'm not. I'm not one of the Ladies of the Lake, but I can tell you that I bought their calendar. Did you? I actually just bought 100 calendars, and I can sell one to anybody this House. They're 15 bucks, and all the money goes back to the Ladies of the Lake.

In the first year, the 2006 calendar, the Ladies of the Lake made a profit of about \$240,000. That went into studies to bring to us so that we would start to listen to the problems that were happening with Lake Simcoe. And now you can buy this year's calendar, as I mentioned a few minutes ago, the 2009 calendar, and I think they plan on doing just as well as that again with this year's calendar.

We have still got a few silos in the whole area around Lake Simcoe. We've got the conservation authority as sort of the lead on this—and municipalities and the provincial government, and some federal money goes towards the conservation authority. They're doing their studies under the leadership of Gayle Wood. I give Gayle a lot of credit. She has been very loyal in moving this forward as well. But you know what? She does need a lot of money—the Lake Simcoe Regional Conservation Authority. If any conservation authority needs a little bit of extra assistance now, it's probably that one.

On top of that, we've got the federal government. John Baird calls the five MPs around Lake Simcoe “the Lake Simcoe caucus.” He doesn't refer to them as the Ontario caucus, because Bruce Stanton and Patrick Brown, Bev Oda, Barry Devolin and—who else is there?

Interjections.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I can't remember. Oh, Peter Van Loan. They are all people who are part of the Lake Simcoe Regional Conservation Authority's area. They represent those parts of that area. I can tell you that they lobby the federal government. So far—and I give the federal government a lot of credit—they've got \$30 million on the table. Now, it's not tied in with the protection plan, it's completely separate money, but people can apply for this—municipalities and organizations can apply for this federal money to do specific cleanups. We've seen some good announcements already—some erosion control projects and that sort of thing. Although only a little bit of that money has been passed out so far, it's a great start from the federal side as well.

Gayle Wood from the conservation authority estimates through her studies that the actual cleanup cost of Lake Simcoe is somewhere around \$160 to \$190 million, so we do need everybody onside as we move forward with the protection plan and the passage of this bill.

1500

There are a couple of areas I wanted to just briefly mention. As soon as this bill was introduced, I had an opportunity to be briefed by some of the policy advisers in Minister Gerretsen's office, and I thank them for it. I was pleased to get that opportunity. But there are some areas with what exists there today that I think are going to be very important as we move forward.

We talked about all the rivers that feed Lake Simcoe, and we talked about the streams and tributaries, but there are also all the municipal drains. Now, a lot of the municipal drains are over 100 years old. They were built specifically to drain farmland. In a lot of cases, there's absolutely no stormwater management associated with that. There are no collecting ponds or retention ponds, that sort of thing, along them, so when we get these heavy rains or we get a spring runoff, everything that is on the farm fields, whether it's some fertilizer or just hay etc., can actually wash off right out into the water. I can tell you that there's absolutely no retention to that. I think if there was good money spent in any one specific area—and I mentioned this to the policy adviser for the minister—if there was a way to spend any money wisely, it would be to try to find a way so that some of that federal money and some of the money associated with the protection plan announcement could be put towards retention on those ponds. It would save a lot of surface runoff just gushing out into the water. We have to do it with plans of subdivision today. In a lot of cases, municipalities are actually treating their stormwater runoff. So I think this would be an excellent way to start really showing some good leadership and helping out the agricultural community at the same time.

The second thing is septic systems. There are some state-of-the-art septic systems being developed. I don't think there's a government in the world that has enough money right now to put a municipal sewer system right around Lake Simcoe. It would be in terms of billions and billions of dollars to put sewer and water services around it. However, we don't have to stick with the conventional septic systems. We can move to these class 6 systems or high-tech septic systems. If we could find federal help or assistance for some of the people in those areas, maybe people within a kilometre or two of the lake, I think it would make a remarkable change: As septic systems wear out, you have to replace them with one of these state-of-the-art systems. A regular system on the water is probably \$7,000 or \$8,000; one of these systems would probably run you \$15,000 to \$20,000. However, if you're talking about cleaning up the lake in the long term, and I think most people around the water's edge or within a kilometre of the shoreline would want to see the best treatment possible, then there may be some opportunities to help some of those people with that.

An area I didn't hear a lot mentioned about in today's debate: It will be interesting to hear the report back from the expert panel as they develop the protection plan. I'm very interested in atmospheric pollution, the phosphorus that comes right from the rain and from the air that we breathe that settles on the water's edge. I certainly have no expertise in that whatsoever, but people tell me, some of the experts from the Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition tell me, that is an issue we have to deal with. As we move forward with this legislation, I'm hoping we can find ways of dealing with that atmospheric pollution as well.

I'm kind of bragging about the area that I represent, but we hear about how everybody has gone green today,

the Green Party and the green shift and all these sorts of things and announcements that are being made. But I can tell you, the people in my riding have been green forever. We have more conservation clubs, more interest in the conservation authority. We have a group called Kids for Turtles, which is helping young kids understand wildlife etc. I think, generally speaking, people want fresh air and clean water. I don't think that's something that anybody would turn their backs on in any way. I think the Lake Simcoe protection plan is really long overdue. I'm hoping that in the end we can get all-party support on the plan that is developed, and I hope it's something that will be good for all of our young people, all of our families and all of Ontario. Lake Simcoe is just too important. As we move forward—and I think our critic Toby Barrett mentioned it—the population of southern Ontario is growing and here, sitting right in the middle of southern central Ontario, is this huge lake—not that deep of a lake, but a lake that needs special attention.

We mentioned about the population of the city of Barrie and the county of Simcoe. The county of Simcoe under the Places to Grow legislation and the intergovernmental action plan, a plan that was put forward by the county of Simcoe, has planned growth of up to 60% in the next 25 years. Many of those people will settle in the Barrie area. So the city of Barrie itself and the city of Orillia will probably need special attention paid to their sewage treatment plants and their surface water management runoff systems.

The minister has more problems than—not this particular minister, but the city of Barrie needs more land. The reality is that if they're going to grow under the Places to Grow legislation by 60%, the land may not be available within the city boundaries, and of course they're looking at the municipalities around them. There's quite a battle going on as we speak right now on the county of Simcoe's new growth plan. The Minister of Municipal Affairs will have a huge issue to deal with and I think it has to be resolved at some point, because we've got this legislation out saying this is where the growth is going to occur, but I don't really think at this time that there will be enough land in 25 years to handle all of this growth. So he's got that tough decision to make as we try to get the townships surrounding the city of Barrie and the county of Simcoe to make some kind of boundary negotiations or agreements or whatever it may be. However, at the same time, money will be required as well to implement this plan.

When they had the intergovernmental action plan public open houses, the one disadvantage to the intergovernmental action plan was increased phosphorus loading on Lake Simcoe. So, right off the bat, the plan that the government pays a lot of money into to help develop in one of the key areas of growth already says there will be an increased amount of phosphorus because of the planned growth on the sewage treatment system. So it's sort of 50-50, kind of a Catch-22 situation here. The government wants to make sure that we have this clean, fresh body of water, yet at the same time the growth plan that

they adopted and are helping the city of Barrie along with pollutes the lake. That can't be. We have to find alternatives. We have to find a solution to make sure that that actually doesn't occur. It would be flying in the face of good planning if that was to occur under this growth plan.

I want to say also that I appreciated my colleague going back in time because when you have this full hour to debate, you get off track sometimes, but it was interesting to hear him speak on the history of this body of water, when people used to go by train to the bottom end of the lake and then take boats up to the Shanty Bay area or the area that I represent now, where they built these huge cottages along the shoreline. It actually has a lot of beautiful history to it. However, at that time they were not year-round homes. They were homes that were built just for summer usage, and a lot of them were like summer mansions for some very wealthy people in the southern end of the province.

As we move forward with this, I hope we don't get too partisan with this particular bill. I hope we can really listen to each other. We can make sure that what's passed is good for this whole province. Mr. Barrett went back—after we introduced the Lake Simcoe protection resolution in November 2006, it was interesting that the Progressive Conservative Party and the Liberal Party leading up to the election of 2007 both held major press conferences in Barrie. I know the Premier went to an event, I think sponsored by the Ladies of the Lake. He actually appeared there and made an announcement that he would put through, if re-elected, a Lake Simcoe protection act, and that's what we are debating here today.

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I know, as Mr. Barrett mentioned, that our leader, John Tory, had a press conference at the side of the water in Barrie just a couple of weeks later, after the Premier was there, and mentioned that our party would move forward with a strategy or plan around the lake as well. So it is good to see that we've got buy-in on some kind of strategy plan for this beautiful body of water. I know it will be appreciated by the citizens who live there today, but I think it will be appreciated by our kids, our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren down the road.

When you think that a body of water has been let go by generation after generation, and here we are, 100 years later, trying to fix it, it's actually kind of a cruel thought that it ever got that far in the beginning. But do you know what? That's our job as legislators. Our job is to move forward and make sure we get this legislation and an affordable plan, and try to subsidize and help the municipalities that are involved and help the conservation authority that is involved to move forward so that we have something really, really strong and positive for the future.

I want to take a moment and talk about when I first introduced the Lake Simcoe Protection Act. In the summer of 2006, we did a consultation at a number of municipalities around the lake, and it was really interesting to see the people who came out to that consultation

to talk about their concerns around water quality and some of the invasive species coming in, and even mentioned, in a lot of cases, the two-stroke motor that my seatmate, Mr. Ouellette, referred to. That's a real concern. In some areas of the world, we don't have two-stroke motors anymore; they're not allowed on lakes. That's an area I was pleased to see addressed.

I knew immediately, after two consultations, that the bill could never be a private member's bill, because there's so much work required as far as bringing in experts and trying to set up enough meetings that you never have time to develop any kind of plan to go along with a private member's bill. That's why we switched it to a resolution. To this day, I thank all the members in this House who were here that day to pass that resolution. I think it was a very positive step as we moved forward. It was the first time in history that Lake Simcoe had been debated in this Legislature. If you think back, how long have we been here? Since 1867. We have the biggest lake in central Ontario sitting right in front of us, and all of a sudden—

Mr. Bill Mauro: Do you want to see a big lake? You've got to go to Thunder Bay.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: It's the biggest freshwater lake other than the Great Lakes. Lake Simcoe is special—I know Superior is special up your way as well. I can tell you that there are a lot of people in this province who drive by Lake Simcoe on the highway, fly over it, know about it, visit a cottage or resort there, or go for a boat ride. It's very, very important to the economy of our province, plus it provides a lot of people with great getaways as well, and it's right within an hour of the city of Toronto and the GTA, where six million, seven million or eight million people live today.

As we move forward with this, I look forward to the debate. I also look forward to constructive criticism on the bill. I can tell you that there will be things that people don't like about the bill, and we want to hear from those people and make sure we incorporate those concerns and have a bill that keeps most of our stakeholders happy.

I just have a few seconds left. I'm not really known as an environmentalist, but I have a lot of environmental issues that I deal with. I'm not going to be in the House tomorrow, because I have an open information centre on something called the Oro moraine. It's thousands of acres in Oro township, just north of the city of Barrie, and is a water filter for the aquifers below it. I can tell you that we've got a good turnout planned; we've got a lot of interesting speakers. I held one about six or seven years ago, and it was great. I hope we have a good turnout tomorrow and move that along the agenda as well, because that's another environmental feature that is very, very sensitive and very, very important to our future.

Thank you very much for allowing me to say a few words today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: There is no question that human action can cause lakes to die, can lose them to human

access. Not locally, but in California, not that far away in this continent, Owens Lake was essentially drained by the city of Los Angeles for its water supply. And in that area, people have had to negotiate with the city of Los Angeles to put a gravel cover on top of the dust pan so that the locals are not simply driven out of their homes by sand storms.

Closer to home is Lake Champlain, which has had severe problems with too much phosphorus, too much nitrogen and thus huge blue-green algae blooms, making the water unswimable and undrinkable.

So when we discuss Lake Simcoe and the protection act and the plan or the framework for the development of a plan, we have to note that the stakes are very high. Hundreds of thousands of people depend on this lake, not just for employment, which is crucial, not just for their small businesses, which is crucial, but for the water that they are going to drink on a daily basis, which is essential to life. We know that we're dealing with very high stakes.

I think it's a good thing that we have this bill before us. And again, as I said earlier, I appreciate the work that was done by activists throughout the area around Lake Simcoe, and I think further afield, to move this issue forward, bring the government to the point that this plan, this act is before us.

But I have to say I am concerned about a number of elements in this bill that don't deal with the larger context within which Lake Simcoe finds itself, and I'm concerned that without dealing with that larger context, it may be that even a good plan will not be able to give us the results that everyone in Ontario is looking forward to having.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I want to get on the record: I thought the comments from the members from Haldimand—Norfolk and Simcoe North were very thoughtful on this very important piece of legislation, Bill 99, the Lake Simcoe act. And it certainly seems to me that the grass roots organization, Campaign Lake Simcoe, has really been ahead of the elected politicians at the municipal, the provincial and the federal levels to get this issue and the whole management of Lake Simcoe to the forefront of attention over the next little while. And I think this bill is essentially a non-partisan bill, because all three parties in this House, and even the independent member, have a stake in this fine water body which provides recreation, business opportunity and certainly the living environment for many millions of people who surround the Lake Simcoe basin.

From the Peterborough perspective, we'll be looking at this very carefully, because in the riding of Peterborough, of course, we have the Kawartha lakes, and the Kawartha lakes over the last number of decades are certainly seeing increased pressure. Many of what I call the traditional mom-and-pop cottages were built after the second world war, and now there's been a real thrust of people coming in, buying up the old mom-and-pop cottages and building the million-dollar homes on Chemong Lake, Buckhorn Lake, Pigeon Lake and

certainly into Stony Lake. And as we've witnessed this increased urbanization, it's certainly putting a lot of pressure on the Kawartha lakes, increased phosphorus content in those bodies of water which has had a direct impact on the sport and recreation fishery that many of us in this House have enjoyed over many, many years. So we'll be watching very, very closely how this bill goes through the House and its development and the impact it will have on our local area.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm very happy to lend my name to support my colleague Garfield Dunlop for all the work that he has done on this piece of legislation and before. I also want to thank our critic, Toby Barrett, for once again providing this Legislature with a very sound series of readings into this piece of legislation.

I'm very proud of Garfield Dunlop, because he is a great environmentalist, he's a great conservationist, and he has been a great protector of Lake Simcoe in this Legislature. One only has to look back to November 2006 when Mr. Dunlop from Simcoe North brought forward a resolution to this Legislature that spoke of the need of those who live in Barrie and Orillia, to offer a superior environment and quality of life for families to live, to work and to play in. He recognized early on the importance of Lake Simcoe and its part of the heritage and culture not only of the region which he represents but also of this entire province. I think we ought to be very thankful for the work that he has put into this issue.

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I think that we also must recognize the hard work of people like Bruce Stanton, Peter Van Loan, Patrick Brown, Bev Oda and Barry Devolin, who, together with the environment minister federally, John Baird, have contributed over \$30 million to the protection of this lake, a very important lake. They were visionary, and I know that they worked very hard with our local champion, our very own Garfield Dunlop.

I just want to conclude with the fact that it was the Conservative Party under the leadership of John Tory and Garfield Dunlop that first recognized the development pressures the Oak Ridges moraine, the greenbelt legislation and the Places to Grow Act have placed on the Lake Simcoe watershed. For that, I'm very proud of my very good friend Garfield Dunlop.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments? Response?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I do wish to respond and echo the comments with respect to the initiative from Garfield Dunlop and the good work done over the years by the Lake Simcoe conservation authority and their various bodies, including LSEMS.

My concern is that it's been a year since the McGuinty government announced this plan; we've now commenced second reading today. I'm not sure what else this government has accomplished in the past year. We monitored the budget this spring. There was no mention at all of any funding for Lake Simcoe. Perhaps there is something coming or something has been announced under the radar screen since then.

I do point out that we made a very clear commitment last fall for funding. As we have just heard, the federal government made a clear commitment for funding.

This government has been around now for five years. Mr. Dunlop has certainly been speaking about Lake Simcoe, not only its problems and its challenges but also offering a way forward and offering some solutions over the past five years. To date, we have seen very little other than the good work of other bodies, the conservation authority and other volunteer bodies. But we do have some questions.

At the end of this debate, ideally there will be some public consultation. What will we end up with? We'll end up with a piece of legislation, albeit enabling legislation, and probably lots of regulation. But we still wonder: Are we left with just nothing but a plan on top of another plan? What concrete is going to come out of this process?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: There is no question that action to protect and improve the situation at Lake Simcoe is long overdue. Lake Simcoe, as people around this House have said today, is an essential part of Ontario's natural and ecological heritage. It supports tourism and recreational fishing, as well as being a source of drinking water for local communities.

The lake's watershed ecosystem has deteriorated seriously due to growth and land use changes that have dated back more than 200 years. It's been impacted by the release of nutrients, pollutants, invasive species, impacts of climate change and pressures from population growth. The Lake Simcoe area is home to around 65 endangered species, covering everything from butterflies to salamanders. The area is also home to 380,000 residents and 12,000 cottages. Thousands of people around Lake Simcoe depend on the lake for their drinking water. It receives treated discharge from 15 sewage treatment plants. So, as I said in an earlier comment, the stakes before us are very high. Hundreds of thousands of people depend on this lake for their livelihoods and for the essentials of life, water itself.

More and more people are going to be dependent on this lake, and in their dependence they will also contribute to the problems the lake faces. If all the new urban developments in south Simcoe were built, they'd add another 240,000 people. Right now, for example, there are plans for 140,000 more people—that's a population bigger than Barrie—on green space in Simcoe county alone. So we've got a huge growth management issue here and I think significant questions about the care and capacity of the lake.

If the current amount of phosphorus going into that lake, as Mr. Barrett referred to, is around 80 tonnes per year of phosphorus, up from 26, 30 in pre-industrial times, and you add a population more than double what you've got now, even with extraordinary measures you have to ask questions about how we will actually reduce the amount of phosphorus going into the water. So what

we have is a lake whose existence as a healthy body of water is crucial to supporting and sustaining hundreds of thousands while at the same time that lake is threatened by the settlement of hundreds of thousands around it.

Small cities are turning into medium-sized cities. Older smaller towns are turning into new small cities. Prime farmland and green space are vanishing. We have to change the way we grow. We need to reduce growth in areas that are greenfields; we need to be developing on brownfields. And in this area, we have to be very careful to plan properly in the green space around Lake Simcoe. That may well mean that Lake Simcoe cannot carry the population load that's projected, that developers would like to load there, because the water may not be there—the clean water, the drinkable, the accessible.

Four decades of studies have shown that impacts from human activities have impaired the health of the Lake Simcoe watershed ecosystem. The Lake Simcoe science advisory committee recommends that Ontario needs to act immediately to protect the lake. Already, parts of the Lake Simcoe area have some protection through the Greenbelt Act that covers parts of Ontario to the south and east of the lake, so those areas are covered, but Simcoe county is almost entirely excluded from these laws. Frankly, again, if you are going to protect the lake, the water quality and those who depend on that water quality, then you have to ask, why is the greenbelt not protecting more of the land around the lake itself? Unless there is substantial change in the way planning is done in the areas around the lake that have been excluded from the greenbelt, our problems with air pollution and water pollution in this lake, even with substantial measures, are going to continue to grow. And it's not just around the lake itself; it's also around the region's sub lakes and rivers that feed into the lake.

In the Lake Simcoe watershed as a whole and elsewhere, pollution, pesticide runoff and unsustainable development have been damaging the lake. Interestingly, natural fish stocks in Lake Simcoe have declined over time and the lake currently does not replenish its own fish population naturally. Think about that. If it was not for people running hatcheries, if it wasn't for direct human intervention, you would not have the populations of fish in that lake that people depend on and expect to have there. What does that say about the health of the lake, that it cannot naturally sustain its fish populations? It does not bode well for the future of that lake.

The biggest problem is phosphorus, which is found in detergents and fertilizers. That phosphorus increases weed and algae growth in Lake Simcoe. As was mentioned, Lake Simcoe's annual phosphorus inputs are two to three times the natural level. As weeds grow in the lake, they choke off the lake's oxygen. Over the last decade, phosphorus runoff into Lake Simcoe has grown substantially. Each summer in Lake Simcoe, there is a rash of beach closures, largely due to E. coli contamination of the lake. Yet around the lake there is no systematic approach to dealing with sewage runoff into the lake. There's a hodgepodge of services and facilities, in

terms of sewage treatment. You don't have a systematic approach unless you have an ongoing and deepening problem.

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At the same time as this is happening, Lake Simcoe's skiing and ice fishing industries are under increased pressure from climate change that poorly planned development is making worse. It was referred to earlier by Mr. Barrett that in fact last year the ice fishing season didn't exist. A whole lot of people who depended on that for a living were out of luck. Those people are victims of climate change, which will be accelerated by further unsustainable growth around this lake. Around the lake there's a rich abundance of walking trails; it's a bike-friendly countryside. Local parks need to flourish, but they need green space protection to remain healthy.

Unplanned sprawl hurts prosperity as it expands over the landscape. Smart growth in southern and central Ontario would reduce climate change emissions and reduce impacts on this lake. But we're not getting enough of that. This Lake Simcoe Protection Act could aid smart growth, depending on how it's written and what it contains. It needs to move development away from sensitive green spaces close to the lake.

Lake Simcoe's tourism industry is currently worth about \$200 million a year, but it depends to a large extent on a healthy Lake Simcoe and Nottawasaga River. Protecting Lake Simcoe and improving its water quality are essential to continued prosperity and employment for the local tourist economy. The voices of environmental groups and citizens are united. They say that we need to act now to protect Lake Simcoe and the Nottawasaga River from poorly planned development.

Bill 99 has the potential to stop and reverse damage to Lake Simcoe, depending on the plan that comes out of it. The legislation can be entirely beautiful; it can have the most wonderful wording ever seen by humankind. But if the plan that comes out of it is not workable and does not actually respect the biological limits of the lake and the ecosystem around it, then it will not do what has to happen and this lake will continue to deteriorate.

We understand that the plan that is going to be put in force by this legislation is already under development. To be effective, Bill 99 has to be comprehensive, the actions that flow out of it have to be well funded and restrictions have to be well enforced. The pressures for development on the Lake Simcoe area are huge. Major developments are under way, and many more are about to start. Environmental groups have made it very clear that they welcome the plan. Although they have concerns that it won't go into effect soon enough and will not be strong enough, they want a plan to be put together that they can push forward and use as a framework for defending the lake.

When it comes to protecting the environment, the short-term vested interests of powerful groups are at stake. We have heard that the McGuinty government is being lobbied very intensively to water down its pesticide bill. I have no doubt that they will be, and have been,

lobbied by developers to water down this bill and the plan that hopefully will come out of it. We recently saw the power of developers in Innisfil, when last week the town council considered partnering with Kimvar developers to seek millions of dollars in damages from local environmental groups and ratepayers. It is not a good sign when citizens and environmental groups stand up to protect the lake and the water quality, and get hit hard by a developer. The idea that a town council would even for a moment consider supporting the developer is disturbing—profoundly disturbing. So the bill needs to move ahead quickly, as does the plan that will implement the changes and the protection. It needs to move quickly and it needs to be effective. Environment and citizens' groups have come together with a unified voice to support strong and effective legislation. Forty-one groups signed on to support this response to the discussion paper, which is a good reflection of the community support for Campaign Lake Simcoe and its suggestions for the direction the province should take on the Lake Simcoe Protection Act.

As well, hundreds of people representing charities, students, municipalities, farmers, cottagers, the conservation authority and the development industry attended two public meetings and three stakeholder consultations. The dominant theme at these meetings is that the province's strategy needs to go further than protecting water quality and quantity. It's impossible to save a lake without protecting the woodlands, wetlands and agricultural areas that surround it. It doesn't exist, like an island, somewhere out in space; it's intimately connected to the wetlands and woodlands around it. If they aren't protected, then you can't save the lake.

Again, there's an anomaly in that the southern and eastern sides of the lake are protected by the greenbelt, which is a good thing, whereas the western side, most threatened by development, is not. There's great concern that Bill 99 does not present a comprehensive plan to protect the land that feeds into the lake, and we know that the heart of the problem with the lake is, in fact, the runoff that comes from that land. If you don't protect the land, you don't protect the lake. The proposed legislation needs to make sure that woodlands, wetlands and others have land use designations that are similar to those in the greenbelt. Through the legislation, land use policies must be developed to identify and protect natural and agricultural areas in the Lake Simcoe watershed and surrounding area, if there's hope and if there's any desire to in fact see that the lake is properly protected. It's vital that the act be tough enough to improve the health of this ailing lake. The priorities, goals and targets in the Lake Simcoe protection plan must be based on the scientific advice of the Lake Simcoe scientific advisory committee. It's clear that human activities are the main cause of Lake Simcoe's problems; therefore, the solutions need to directly answer the question: What is acceptable development in the area affected by the act? If that question is not determined, then all the rest will be for naught.

A number of things need to be done to strengthen the act. Unless these concerns are addressed, we don't

believe that the lake and the surrounding areas will be truly and adequately safeguarded against development and urban sprawl.

First, the plan must put in place designated policies to protect, improve and restore the watershed's key natural features and functions, and ensure that natural forest and wetland cover enhance Lake Simcoe's water quality and the watershed's biodiversity. The act and plan need to ensure a stronger emphasis on improved land use planning.

Secondly, the plan should apply not only to the watershed but also to adjacent areas on the west side of the lake where development pressures are greatest and the watershed is narrowest. The outer boundaries of the Lake Simcoe watershed come within 500 metres of the lake at some points. It's not possible to restore the lake by restricting policies and actions to within the watershed. Therefore, the plan has to apply to the entire south Georgian Bay-Lake Simcoe source protection region. If you want to protect it, you have to look at it in a big-picture kind of way. You have to act on that big picture. You have to protect the lake from multiple sources of contamination.

Third, a seemingly narrow, but still important point: The act distinguishes between policies and so-called "designated policies." Typically, land use decisions need only conform with "designated policies." So any policies regarding the protection of natural features should be listed as "designated policies" under the Lake Simcoe protection plan.

Fourth, the bill includes a provision, subsection 5(2), that allows policies under the plan to override municipal standards—for instance, official plans, zoning bylaws—even if those standards are more restrictive than the ones in the plan.

1540 This is a very problematic section of this bill. My sense is that folks who are in the gallery today from the Lake Simcoe area who are concerned about protecting the lake, folks who are watching this now would say, "Okay, I can live with that because the rest of the bill will be helpful." But I want to say why this is a significant mistake on the part of the government: because if you look at the history of this province, if you look at what has been done to really pioneer, really make a difference in terms of new legislation, in terms of moving things to a whole other level, then you have to look at the municipal level. Typically, the province has been behind. It has been a laggard; it has been a follower. It has depended on the municipal level to develop environmental protection, public health protection. Cities have come forward, developed new approaches, shown that it's politically feasible, and then provincial governments of all stripes have followed what the cities have pioneered. And so when I see a section like this in the act that says to me, "Do you know what? We're going to cap activity. The outer level of what we're willing to do is the ceiling," then I know a mistake is being made because the innovative and creative process that goes on in cities is going to be choked off. That is a political mistake on

the part of the government in this bill. In consideration in committee, I urge the parliamentary assistant and the minister to look at this and think about how they could rework it so that municipalities retain their powers to go beyond the letter of the law, to expand the protection, because it's the municipalities, very directly, that will have to deal with foul drinking water, with blue-green algae, with their constituents coming to them after they've gone to a beach that has been covered in slime and saying, "You have to do something about this." Municipalities will be in that impossible position of saying, "Well, in fact, we can't do anything about this. The provincial legislation prevents us from taking the next step forward." I'm not saying that municipalities are the be-all and end-all, but in the history of this province, recognize that in fact municipalities have pioneered and set the ground and the space for provincial governments to act, and restricting them from using this legislation as a foundation for going forward is a political mistake.

The fifth point I want to raise: Because human activities are the main cause of Lake Simcoe's environmental problems, the act and plan have to avoid loopholes that can be exploited by developers. It is not that complex. You have land within driving distance of a major metropolitan centre. Developers buy that land, they buy it cheaply, they develop inexpensively and they sell it to people who are willing to commute for an hour and a half or two hours a day to get to a job in the northern part of the GTA.

The pressure to develop both subdivisions and resort spaces is extraordinary. Any developer who looks at this act and who looks at the plan that comes out of this act will be using crowbars to get at sections that will allow them to get around the act, to put in place the development that will allow them to make a good buck. So when this is written, when this is finalized, it should have those loopholes closed so that the protection that everybody in this House wants is, in fact, real, solid and, to the extent that it can be, crowbar proof.

The act should apply to all resort developments lacking final approval under the Planning Act, the Environmental Assessment Act, the Ontario Water Resources Act, the Environmental Protection Act and so on. There will be people who will be trying to get stuff through, and there's some stuff that's already in process. The lake needs to be protected from bad development, and the government should be recognizing that and acting to protect against bad development.

Sixth, section 26 of the act must be strengthened to indicate that regulations will—not may—be made and that regulations will be in place at the coming into force of the plan. Furthermore, it must be made explicit that the Lake Simcoe protection plan's shoreline development restrictions apply to residential redevelopments, resort development, servicing, and include a shoreline restoration plan.

The plan should prohibit grandfathering of development projects that do not have final approvals and permits. The Lake Simcoe protection plan should be made

effective as of December 6, 2007, the date of the announcement of the interim phosphorus regulation, and all developments or projects caught by this regulation should be subject to the act and/or plan. Too much was allowed to go through. Citizens tried to stop it; they weren't successful. This government can act and it can protect the lake. Every day that you let things slip means we're in a much deeper hole that we have to dig our way out of. We are much closer to this lake being overloaded biologically. We are much closer to a point where it will be very difficult to salvage the lake, to set a new course to protect it.

Seventh, the plan should prohibit significant shoreline alterations. In fact, there needs to be better clarification of what constitutes a shoreline alteration.

Eighth, a number of information gaps and clarifications are needed before the plan is launched, including information about forest cover, better definitions of "settlement" as opposed to "resort," and lake-carrying capacity for boats. It is interesting, I was in Barrie earlier this year talking to some people on council there. This is a problem they're trying to work through, because you have large numbers of pleasure craft on the lake—and not just a little outboard, not just a little rowboat; you've got people who have boats out there with sleeping cabins. And you get more and more and more boats that have toilets on board, and you get more and more impact directly into lake water. If you're going to protect this lake, you have to think about—and it should be addressed in this plan—how are you going to deal with that whole question of direct sewage from boats into the lake.

Finally, the act and the plan must explicitly recognize that human activities are problems and the cause of the lake's problems—not just phosphorus levels. Phosphorus levels are a symptom of the larger problem. We know that the decline in water quality is primarily due to pollution from land-based rural and urban sources. It's interesting that while I was preparing to speak about this, I checked out the issues they're dealing with at Lake Champlain in Quebec and Vermont. They have a program there of dealing with runoff from settled areas and from agricultural areas. With farmers, they try to give them a lot of support. They work on best management practices for fertilizer and for manure, because they know that putting manure out on a field in winter, while the ground is frozen, can result in a rainstorm storm or simply runoff carrying everything straight into the lake with never any useful amendment to the soil itself. Even that being said, in the settled areas the amount of phosphorus coming off is three to three-and-a-half times more than that coming off from the agricultural areas because people use so much fertilizer for their lawns. So it isn't just a question of a problem with agricultural runoff, there is a huge problem with urban runoff.

The full range of activities that are causing problems for the lake has to be addressed. Thus this act has to protect the lake from a full range of pollutants. The legislation has been a long time coming. It's enabling

legislation. Much of whether it's going to be effective or not is something we'll find out in the details, in the plan that's going to be developed over the next nine months. We need to get this act through very quickly. Notwithstanding its failings, it should be put through. The regulations should be put together. The plan should be put together and it should be moved forward. We need to get it right, not just quick but right. Not just for Lake Simcoe and its residents, but for future legislation to protect other watersheds in Ontario and beyond. My colleague from Peterborough spoke to the fact that they are going to watch this very closely, because they're dealing with local lakes, they're dealing with damage to those lakes, and what's done here people in other jurisdictions will be able to point to, for good or ill. So to the parliamentary assistant of the minister I say, recognize that you're not just doing an act for Lake Simcoe; you're doing an act that will be used around the province.

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One lesson we need to draw from this whole process is that it is not just a question of addressing the local environmental impacts or even the local land use planning from this level; there are also political dimensions. In large parts of Ontario, developers have too much influence over municipal politics and elections. We need to go beyond this kind of legislation and look at how we insulate those councils from developer influence. We have to make sure that candidates can run who don't have to depend on developer dollars, so that they can act independently and so that land use decisions reflect more accurately the needs and the will of the people in an area, rather than the dollars and influence of development corporations. There are good developers; I've met them. But there are also developers who are very happy to throw their weight around, and politicians at the local level need to be insulated from them. That would change the landscape, quite literally, in Ontario.

So I'm going to wrap up and say that all of us in this House should give thanks to those folks in the Lake Simcoe area who spent hours and years pressing for action to protect Lake Simcoe and pressing to make sure that the action that was taken would have the necessary impact. We can't have simply half measures. We know that if we don't act in a substantive way on this lake, hundreds of thousands of people will be put in an impossible position with regard to their way of life and their source of water.

I think that with the support of those who fought for years, who pushed hard for change, there is the opportunity to have a very sane and practical plan for this area, and I hope that all three parties in this House take advantage of that opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments.

Mr. Mike Colle: I want to say that I listened attentively to the member from Toronto—Danforth, and he certainly was very correct in saying that if you're going to save the lake, you can't just concentrate on the lake itself; you have to concentrate as much on the abutting

lands around the lake and the water sources. So land use planning and what people do around Lake Simcoe in the communities is critically important, and I think that's something that he emphasized.

The one point that I take umbrage with is that he made a point of saying that municipalities are always ahead of provincial governments when it comes to environmental protection and innovation. Well, I would say that's sometimes true, but many times it is not true, and I've seen it firsthand. It was the provincial government that instituted the Niagara Escarpment legislation. It would never have been done by the municipalities of the Niagara Escarpment, which still oppose it to this day.

If you take a look at the Oak Ridges Moraine Protection Act, this province's Oak Ridges moraine was being carved up by all the municipalities across the Oak Ridges moraine. They were granting development rights to any developer who came before them, for the last 50 years. It was the province that brought in the Oak Ridges Moraine Protection Act.

Most recently, another example where a provincial government has taken leadership is the greenbelt legislation. There are many municipal leaders who still oppose the greenbelt legislation. So it's not always municipal governments that take the lead. Sure, there are cases where municipalities are innovative, but not always. That's why you need legislation like this, that is comprehensive, that gives everybody comprehensive guidelines. You can't do it one municipality at a time, because some municipalities are very progressive and some are very regressive.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments? The member for Oak Ridges—Markham.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Whitby—Oshawa.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Sorry, Whitby—Oshawa.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm pleased to rise for a few moments and give a few comments to this bill, which is meant to restore the ecological health of the Lake Simcoe watershed. This is a really important piece of legislation, of course, because it speaks to the issues that are near and dear to all of us: clean water for both recreational use and for drinking water as well. Given the fact that Lake Simcoe is the largest inland lake in Ontario excluding the great lakes, it's a great place to start these efforts. Certainly it's not something that should stop with that but is something that, I think, will establish a plan for the future in terms of the restoration of lakes in Ontario and also a blueprint of action for the future. So there are a number of things that we hope are going to come from this legislation and a plan that is going to be usable with respect to other lakes here in Ontario, and that's something that I hope we'll all have an opportunity to have some input into.

But there are some issues. Particularly, I heard the member opposite mentioning the greenbelt legislation. Of course, I understand the purpose of the greenbelt legislation, I understand what it was meant to do, but I think

the fact remains that there are many individual property rights that were not protected as a result of that. Nobody questions the need for the greenbelt, nobody is opposed to the idea of green space, but I think there has to be the science behind it, and there has to be the rationalization of those areas that are chosen for the greenbelt.

When we look at Lake Simcoe, we do need to look at the adjoining land and the uses to which the land is being put. There's no question that that has an impact, and it is nice that we're finally recognizing the significance of protecting our lands for future generations. As a parent of three children, I don't want to be in the position some day of having to say to my children, "Well, good luck with it. We did what we could to destroy it." We need to be part of the solution.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. Questions and comments? Member for Trinity—Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to congratulate my colleague from Toronto Danforth for the arguments that were presented, wherein he talked about some positive aspects of the bill and also pointed out, like so many other environmental groups, how it can be improved. I know the Liberals always say, "Yes, we could do better." These are examples of bills where we can do better and where we can make them stronger. There's no reason why we cannot take the time, as we will when we debate the bill, to listen to other groups and see how best we could do that. Often we tend to be happy with the product that we produce rather than finding ways to make it stronger. I'm not sure why we do that. I'm not sure why we wait for another day to introduce yet another bill to deal with issues that have been raised by groups rather than dealing with them now. We do this all the time. It's particular of many political parties, specifically Liberals who like to go slow on many, many things and call them radical changes to boot.

My colleague mentions that there are ways that this bill can be improved and that it would be strengthened and could be strengthened. We would be more supportive if the government were to consider adequately covering land-based policies—policies in and beyond the watershed. He spoke on that at length.

Allowing municipalities to implement stronger standards: We saw that with the pesticides bill, where rather than saying, "We have a standard, but we permit municipalities to do better than the standard"—rather than allowing municipalities to do that, in this bill, we're saying, "No, they can't. We like to harmonize it at a lower level rather than a higher level."

We want to make sure this bill applies to all resort developments. My colleague made mention of that.

The bill can be made stronger, and we would support it if that were to be the case.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments? The member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: You either get climate change, or you don't. If you don't get it, you can come up with any

number of euphemisms and other programs that essentially amount to nothing. If you do, as the government of which I'm pleased to serve does, you introduce such groundbreaking pieces of legislation as the Places to Grow Act for denser urban communities; the Clean Water Act; the source water protection act; and one that we are all proud of, that everyone in this assembly has contributed to: the Ontario greenbelt, which protects more land than the size of the province of Prince Edward Island.

This protection for Lake Simcoe is a piece of legislation that has never been more comprehensive. This is something that, taken together with the other environmental legislation put forth by our government, allows us to say to the generation that follows us and to the generations after that, "We understood the need. We addressed it from many different facets. We protected our water, we protected our air, and we protected our bodies of water."

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What we leave to the generations that come after us is an environment that's clean and, as I believe the member for Oakville said a little bit earlier, a lake so that he can look forward to saying, "In my lifetime it was as clean at the end as it was when we started"; in our lifetime, where the world for many of us will have gone from being populated by some two billion people to—around the time that many of us will approach the end of our lives—nine billion people, to say to the generations that follow us, with quadruple the population, "We have managed to clean up our air, clean up our water and to look after a body of water such as Lake Simcoe, which is a source of commerce, a source of pleasure, a source of recreation to so many of us here in the GTA."

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Response?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'd like to thank the members for Mississauga—Streetsville, Trinity—Spadina, Whitby—Oshawa and Eglinton—Lawrence for their comments. I want to go back in particular to the comments from the member for Eglinton—Lawrence. He's right; there are times when the province has taken action on things that fractured power at the municipal level has not been able to address. There are two things that I wanted to bring out here. One is that in fact it makes sense to have provincial legislation, in terms of environmental protection, be a floor. What has happened in this act is that it has become a ceiling again. I still believe that my arguments are correct, that you should set a floor and let municipalities have a higher level of protection. What you were talking about before with the Niagara Escarpment, the Oak Ridges moraine—you set a baseline. My hope is that municipalities that felt that that baseline was not strong enough would be able to go beyond that.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I think, member, that you would recognize that it's good to have those opportunities.

The other thing that comes out of what you said reinforces my point about the need to reform municipal

election finances. Too many councils and too many councillors are dependent on local developers for the funds to get elected. In this, one need not allege any corruption and just simply say that people look at where the money is coming from and they're careful, they're too careful. So you get councils that will approve any development application that comes before them.

I had an opportunity to talk to the mayor of Caledon, who is going through a difficult time with development in her area. She, I think, is a very brave person taking a tough stand, but not everyone is willing to take that on, particularly if they have to depend on developers for their election finances.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Leal: It indeed is a pleasure to spend a few moments this afternoon to give some thoughts on Bill 99, the Lake Simcoe Protection Act.

I would be remiss if I didn't express condolences at the recent passing in Montreal of the father of the federal finance minister, Mr. Flaherty, and the father-in-law of the member for Whitby—Ajax—and certainly to their family.

Indeed, if you look over the last 30-plus years in the province of Ontario, a number of significant acts have come into being. I think of 1971, when Mr. Davis assumed the premiership of the province of Ontario, and his significant leadership in developing the Niagara Escarpment Commission bill. I know at that particular time, if you read some of the history, that the long-serving member from St. Catharines, Mr. Bradley, commented over many years that if it hadn't been for the implementation of the Niagara Escarpment act, every centimetre of green space in the Niagara Peninsula would have been paved over—many advocating those municipal politicians who wanted to develop every area of land to the nth degree to increase assessment in that area. So it was a very forward-looking piece of legislation, the Niagara Escarpment Commission, that certainly governs a lot of the land use in that very important part of Ontario.

The Harris-Eves government brought in the Oak Ridges Moraine Protection Act. Certainly the Oak Ridges moraine does touch the southwestern boundary of the riding of Peterborough, and I know that the springs that are contained in the Oak Ridges moraine are a very important water recharge area for source water for many of the municipalities that border the Oak Ridges moraine. Again, it was a very important and significant piece of legislation to contain development in that very important area, to protect it for future generations and protect important source water for that area. That part of the eastern end of the GTA has gone through a very extensive population expansion over the last 20 to 30 years.

We built upon those two acts by bringing in the Greenbelt Act, preserving an area in Ontario the size of Prince Edward Island, again so that future generations have an area that they can enjoy and we curtail the urban sprawl which we have witnessed so often and extensively in the area of southern Ontario.

I certainly see Bill 99, the Lake Simcoe Protection Act, as an important extension of those other two important pieces of legislation that I just outlined. For people who are viewing our proceedings this afternoon, it's interesting, some of the statistics about the Lake Simcoe area. It's the largest inland lake other than the Great Lakes in southern Ontario. It has a surface of 744 square kilometres, basically 30 kilometres long and 25 kilometres wide. The average depth is 15 metres. Thirty-five rivers flow into Lake Simcoe, including Holland River, Black River, Beaver River, Pefferlaw River and the Uxbridge Brook—almost 4,000 kilometres of streams. The islands of Lake Simcoe are Georgina Island, Thorah Island, Strawberry Island—which is important; Pope John XXIII made a visit to Strawberry Island on his visit to Canada—Snake Island, Fox Island and Grape Island. Major settlements in the area are Orillia and Barrie. It's bordered by Simcoe county, York and Durham regions, encompassing 23 municipalities. Over 350,000 people live in the Lake Simcoe watershed, with a seasonal summer population of up to 400,000. Forty-seven per cent of the watershed's land area, approximately 2,800 square kilometres, is currently agricultural. Urban and rural development and roads make up an estimated 14% of the area. Lake Simcoe provides drinking water for eight communities and receives treated discharge from 15 sewage treatment plants.

It's an area where agriculture plays a very important role. It includes provincially significant prime agricultural areas, especially crop areas, such as the world-renowned Holland Marsh. Dominant crops in the area include lettuce, carrots, onions, celery, corn and alfalfa. Livestock production includes beef cattle, poultry and horses. Specialty farms include orchards, vineyards, wildflower, tree nurseries and turf grass operations. The annual farm production value of this area in 2006, from Statistics Canada, indicates that it generates \$300 million worth of agricultural activity in that area.

We know that it's an important tourist destination year round, with fishing, boating, cottaging and swimming, and it's an important link to the Trent-Severn waterway. I will note that there was a federal report that was just completed and released in the spring called It's All About Water, which looked at the future of the Trent-Severn system. Of course, the Trent-Severn system empties into Lake Simcoe and it's a very important part of that network. The recreational activities alone generate more than \$200 million a year for the local economy.

Approximately 35% of the Lake Simcoe watershed is under natural cover, woodlands and wetlands. It supports a wide range of aquatic animals, cold water fish such as lake trout, whitefish and other species.

As I said, we know that over the last number of decades, Lake Simcoe, through increased urbanization, is under a tremendous amount of pressure. Key threats to the environment, to Lake Simcoe's health, include excessive phosphorus and other pollutants. Examples are chloride, organic carbon, iron, toxic metals, organic chemicals, inorganic pesticides and pharmaceuticals.

We have noted invasive species such as the rusty crayfish, round goby and zebra mussels, which are certainly prevalent in the Kawartha Lakes system.

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We've noted that climate change has had a dramatic impact. In 2001, the Canadian Ice Fishing Championship was cancelled due to the lack of ice on Lake Simcoe for the first time in 50 years. I'll get on the record: I think the only person who doesn't believe in climate change is the Republican vice-presidential candidate, Sarah Palin, the Governor of Alaska, who candidly admitted during one interview that in Alaska climate change doesn't exist. So much for her perhaps moving into the White House after November 4. God help us all.

We've seen the loss and fragmentation of natural areas that bound the area of the habitat around Lake Simcoe. So it's important that we move forward with this very important piece of legislation, and it's one of these, I think, rare pieces of legislation where there is a real opportunity for all three parties in this House, including the independent member, to come together in unity to provide a piece of legislation and a bill that we can all be proud of and that will certainly last and have significance for generations to come.

We're certainly pleased that in June of this year the government of Ontario indicated that we would be making a \$20-million investment in the Lake Simcoe area, bringing in protection measures, assisting with scientific research and farm and other stewardship activities and working with the Lake Simcoe science advisory committee. It's certainly something that we feel is very important, that this will be an evidence-based, science-based approach that we will bring to this very important piece of legislation, something that everybody is certainly counting on as we move forward.

The campaign to save Lake Simcoe certainly has been a grassroots initiative. Two of the members of the Ladies of the Lake were in our west gallery today. As is often the case with a lot of these important measures, not only in this province but throughout our nation, there is a spark that starts through grassroots activity and grabs the attention of the elected officials at the municipal, provincial and federal levels in order to put pressure on to enact a piece of legislation, which Bill 99, the Lake Simcoe Protection Act, is all about.

So, as I said previously, not only is it important that we come up with a permanent, long-term strategy to protect Lake Simcoe and build on the science and work that has already been done by the province, the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority, municipalities, farmers and community groups, through such initiatives as the Lake Simcoe environmental management strategy, but also the member who spoke previously, Mr. Tabuns, I think has hit upon a very important issue here: that as we implement Bill 99, the Lake Simcoe act, there will be many other areas of the province that will be looking at this very closely to see how successful Bill 99 will be, because it certainly can be replicated in other parts of Ontario.

As I said previously in our two minutes, in the Kawartha Lakes, which make up a large part of the great riding of Peterborough, we have some similar issues, not to the scale that they're experiencing in Lake Simcoe today, but you can certainly see down the road, through the Places to Grow legislation, that Peterborough has been acknowledged as a growth area. As people move out of the GTA and into the Peterborough, Port Hope, Cobourg and Northumberland areas, we will certainly see the need to perhaps bring in our own piece of legislation, perhaps the Kawartha Lakes protection act, down the road, to meet some of the increased pressures that we have seen.

I know that on Stony Lake, one of the most beautiful of the Kawartha Lakes, we've witnessed in the last 10 years the traditional cottages being bought up, and they've been replaced by rather large homes. When that kind of pressure occurs, people expect to have the full, urban services that they've experienced in other parts of Ontario where they've previously lived. They make the move on the lake, build a large permanent home, and increasingly, on Stony, Clear, Catchacoma, Buckhorn, Pigeon and Chemong, we've seen the cottage setting looking more and more like a traditional urban setting that we have within the city of Peterborough. With that, it puts tremendous pressure on those bodies of water.

I know from my part of Ontario, we'll be looking very carefully over the next number of years as Bill 99 gets approved in this House. The regulations associated with Bill 99 will come into effect and see the impact that it will have in arresting some of the pressures that urban sprawl has put upon Lake Simcoe. Truly, this has the opportunity to be a great partnership with the municipalities that make up Simcoe county, Barrie and Orillia. I know the minister from Orillia has been a real champion and knows full well how important this particular piece of legislation will be in her particular area.

We're looking at a number of things to create stronger protections for threatened lakes like Lake Simcoe and we're taking strong action to protect the health of Lake Simcoe. We're certainly going to raise the bar for sewage treatment standards and set strict limits on pollutants such as phosphorus. Not only do we know that phosphorus does occur naturally within ecosystems, but also the use of detergents has added additional phosphorus into our water bodies. We want to enhance protection of the watershed by building on the findings of the scientific and community planning studies that have been undertaken in recent years and create the appropriate governance structure as recommended by experts who have studied what to do—the Lake Simcoe environmental management strategy working group—and to promote recreational opportunities on Lake Simcoe and protect the future of that.

We know that the values of threats associated with Lake Simcoe in many ways are unique. Lake Simcoe is the largest inland lake in southern Ontario. It has tremendous recreational value to millions of people who live within driving distance, including the province's

largest all-season fishery. It's a source of drinking water for many communities and receives waste water from many municipal treatment plants.

It's certainly important, as you look through Bill 99—some of the sections of this bill, if passed by the Legislature, would set the framework for protecting the lake by allowing the province to create the Lake Simcoe protection plan, setting out clear objectives, which are very important to the plan; setting the scope of the plan and other mechanisms for carrying it out; creating two advisory committees to oversee plan implementation; allowing the province to regulate shoreline protection in critical areas to protect water quality; allowing the province to create a water quality training and offsetting program to achieve the greatest pollution reduction for the least cost; and allowing the province to require municipalities to pass bylaws to control site alteration, topsoil removal, tree cutting, use of lawn fertilizers and pet waste. I take it, together, these are the important parts of the bill, which will allow for comprehensive protection for Lake Simcoe.

The plan will also set the priorities and targets for addressing key threats to the health of the Lake Simcoe ecosystem. Threats include excessive phosphorus and other pollutants, invasive species, climate change, loss of fragmentation of natural areas of habitat, changes to the hydraulic cycle, and human use of fish and other resources that are also potential threats. The Lake Simcoe protection plan would use a mix of mandatory and voluntary measures to achieve these targets. It would integrate with Ontario's existing frameworks for environmental protection and land use planning. This will provide protection for the lake where it needs it most, without duplicating existing protections.

Over the summer, my colleague the Minister of the Environment and his ministry had an opportunity to consult with stakeholder groups and aboriginal communities. Consultation with our aboriginal communities is very important because they have a very important stake in the health of the Lake Simcoe area. Part of our government's initiative over the last number of years, certainly since the report of Sid Linden's commission on the issues surrounding Ipperwash—one of the things that came out of that was the need to have comprehensive consultations with our aboriginal communities when any new government initiative comes forward. Certainly, on Bill 99, we'll continue to have extensive consultations with the aboriginal communities which are part of that plan.

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Other jurisdictions, of course, are using cap-and-trade systems successfully to reduce the amount of nutrients going into our water bodies. Ontario is using cap and trade to help reduce air emissions. Designed properly, water quality trading and offsetting could help reduce phosphorus loadings to this lake and other bodies in the province of Ontario, to achieve those reductions in a practical and economically feasible manner. Water quality trading would also enable the trading of pollutants other than phosphorus if necessary in the future.

Water quality trading and offsetting is a market-based approach. It sets limits on pollutants. It then allows those who have to pay more to reduce pollutants the option to pay for activities that reduce pollutants in other areas of the watershed at a lower cost until the upgrade, if necessary. The same amount of pollution is reduced, at a total cost.

The proposed legislation would allow Ontario to develop a regulation governing water quality trading and offsetting. However, regulation can't be made establishing a water quality trading and offsetting program for an area unless a report has been prepared and consulted which examines the feasibility of the program and its potential for improve water quality.

We're going to study its effectiveness as a tool in reducing phosphorous loading in Lake Simcoe. We won't develop a regulation unless we are satisfied water quality trading and offsetting is the right tool to use in this particular case. We'll have continuous consultation as we move forward with a whole variety of measures to improve the health of Lake Simcoe.

Another part of this bill that I feel is important is to regulate shoreline protection. The shoreline is indeed critical in contributing to the health of the lake and its tributaries. Through this bill, we're proposing a new regulation-making authority under the proposed Lake Simcoe Protection Act to manage activities on lands near lake shorelines and tributaries near wetlands. For example, the regulation could provide additional protection for vegetative buffers around the shoreline and tributaries, something we know is extremely important. Initially, it would apply to shoreline landowners and landowners with property adjacent to tributary watercourses, including cottages, urban and rural, but not our farm community.

In July 2007, Premier McGuinty of course endorsed the working group report and committed to creating a governance structure as recommended by the working group.

I only have 10 minutes, but this is such an important piece of legislation—I know members could go on and on and on, but we feel that this is a real opportunity to protect this area for future generations.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Madam Speaker, on a point of order: I would ask for unanimous consent to give Mr. Leal another five minutes, as he obviously wasn't finished his remarks.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): The member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills has asked for unanimous consent to give five more minutes to the member for Peterborough. Does everyone agree? All right. The member from Peterborough, you are allowed five more minutes. Could you put five minutes on the clock, please, Clerks?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I do appreciate my good friend the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills for giving me the opportunity to talk on.

One of the things I think is so important and I'd like to get back to again is why this particular piece of legislation, Bill 99, will be a bill, if it's implemented correctly and through all-party support, that will become the benchmark and standard for other areas of the province to look at. I certainly commented on the Kawartha Lakes, and a lot of people in my community have contacted me and said they'll be looking very carefully at how this bill develops over the next little while to see if we can replicate some of the key components of this bill in looking at how we start to manage the Kawartha Lakes in the future. Think of the many other parts of Ontario that will really profit from the work surrounding this bill. If it goes to committee, there will be an opportunity for expert witnesses to come forward, not only people who are interested in this particular bill, but I think we'll see a rather large group of people from other parts of Ontario come forward to provide their testimony and make their presentations. Like other bills I alluded to, in terms of the evolution of protecting areas of the province—the Niagara Escarpment Commission, the Oak Ridges moraine act, the Greenbelt Act—I think that from a historical perspective, when many of us have the opportunity to look back, or future generations look back, they will see this as an important watershed—pardon the pun—in Ontario's development.

One of the areas we will need to look at, of course, will be the various discharges. I'm very pleased that the government of the Ontario provided \$200,000 to the University of Guelph and to Trent University, in my hometown of Peterborough, to develop models to improve loading estimates and more accurately identify local sources of atmospheric phosphorus, quantify how much local sources contribute to total atmospheric disposition and identify opportunities to develop effective strategies to manage and control local sources of atmospheric phosphorus.

It's interesting that Professor Chris Metcalfe, who heads up the Trent University water quality branch, has been recognized internationally for his work looking at modelling and providing models to other communities, not only in Ontario and Canada but throughout the world, in terms of water management, along with the DNA cluster at Trent University in Peterborough that's certainly significantly funded by our own Ministry of Research and Innovation under the great leadership of John Wilkinson. About a year ago, the former Minister of the Environment, the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore, had an opportunity to visit Trent University to make a significant funding announcement for the water resources unit there to allow them to do the groundbreaking research they have been doing in the area of modelling pressures on our system.

I have about 52 seconds to sum up.

Interjections.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I know they want to hear me go on, and I appreciate the opportunity, but I must say that I think the Lake Simcoe Protection Act, along with the greenbelt plan, the growth plan and the Oak Ridges

moraine plan, certainly has brought Ontario to the forefront of environmental protection. Look at this as a non-partisan issue, because many of these bills have been brought in by governments of other stripes, noting that we all have an important stake in protecting our environment. So as each government goes through their time, they'll keep bringing in important pieces of legislation. We see Bill 99 as an important part of that.

My friend from Trinity-Spadina is cheering me on this afternoon; that's wonderful to hear.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased rise to respond to the member from Peterborough. He raised a number of issues about how development pressures brought about by the Oak Ridges moraine, the greenbelt legislation and the Places to Grow Act have initiated and probably moved forward the need for Bill 99. I think that's an important point to consider here, because when you passed the greenbelt legislation, when we were moving forward on some of those protections, were you thinking in terms of what was going to happen with the leapfrogging of development?

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I would question whether in fact you did think some of that through, which is why we're talking about this now. I do want to talk about the timing, however, because if you look back at our member from Simcoe North, Garfield Dunlop, he was bringing forward a PC resolution almost two years ago, November 2006, and while I was not in the Legislature, it is my understanding that that resolution did pass. I'll just read you one of the points that he talks about: "Recognize that the protection and improvement of water quality in Lake Simcoe must be a government priority." I reiterate, this resolution passed two years ago.

So we move forward a year and the McGuinty Liberals bring forward that they would do a Lake Simcoe plan. So now we're a year away from that and we're debating Bill 99, but we still haven't seen the plan. So what I'd like to do and encourage the government to do is, let's expedite this a little bit and actually bring forward the plan so that the individuals who have been advocating so well and the grassroots organizations who have been working so hard to protect Lake Simcoe actually get to review the plan and move forward. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The member from Peterborough made reference to experts and that he welcomes the experts who will be coming, presumably, in the second reading debate. I don't know whether you personally were inviting them or the government is going to invite experts, but I think it's a great idea, because I think that the experts will come and speak to this bill and will make recommendations about how the bill could be improved. I'm assuming that's why we're inviting the experts, not just to simply confirm what you have already

done but to help you to make the bill better. So I'm pleased that the member from Peterborough, at least one member on the other side, is receptive to that kind of possibility, that experts could enlighten him and other Liberal members of the committee and that through that experience we might find a way to make the bill better. If that is the case, I support him fully, and I'm looking forward to that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments? The member for Oakville.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate again and to comment on the remarks from my colleague from Peterborough. It was interesting also, as I listened to his remarks, how he picked up on some of the remarks from the member from Toronto-Danforth. It's interesting that when a piece of legislation such as this goes through and everybody seems to be—all the comments today for the most part, even through the lens of the opposition, whose job it is to find areas where the bill may be improved—even if you look through that lens, there's a very positive attitude about this whole bill, I think, from all parties, that everybody thinks we should move forward on it. And it was interesting to watch one member build upon the ideas of another member. The member from Toronto-Danforth was talking about some of the learnings that we may be able to incorporate province-wide from what we learn about Lake Simcoe and what sort of stuff comes out of that and what works and what doesn't, and what the plan eventually looks like, should be able to be applied to the province at large. If you look at some of the major things that we've been able to do as a government—and previous governments before us—things like the greenbelt and the Oak Ridges moraine wouldn't have been protected in past because society had a much different attitude about the environment. I think politicians have caught up to the people, to the public sentiment on that. Certainly in my own town of Oakville we went through a really bad time with algae. We formed a little citizens' group. There was a lot of technical expertise on that group. They were called the Lake Ontario Shoreline Algae Action Advisory Committee, and I learned more about algae than I really ever wanted to know. It's interesting how you just sort of get immersed in things like zebra mussels, clarity, filtering the water, sunlight getting to places it had never gotten to before. I'm hoping that what comes out of Lake Simcoe we can apply in communities like my own of Oakville and we can apply it in other areas around the province and make the whole province a better place to live.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments? The member for Haldimand-Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: During his presentation, the member from Peterborough yet again, as have others, made reference to pressures of population growth—the member from Toronto-Danforth talked about that as well and the impact that will have on phosphorus-loading in the tributaries and Lake Simcoe itself. We do recognize that there are many, many other impacts of population

growth. I don't know whether this legislation or the attendant regulation will be up to the job to control population growth.

I think it's a given: The people are coming anyway. We're looking at something like 600,000 people living in this area in 2021—more traffic congestion, more air pollution, more noise. There is not a regional transit system. People no longer go to that lodge on Lake Simcoe by train or by steamer, as they did in the days of Stephen Leacock—and obviously a demand for, a request for additional recreational resources.

But in the context of this legislation, it is a given that with that many people joining the 350,000 other people in that watershed, it's going to have a very negative impact on the water quality, the quality of surface water, and the streams, the tributaries, the lake itself, a negative impact—this is a given—on groundwater, not only the quality of groundwater but also the quantity of groundwater. The woodlands—trees will be cut down. I think of that old saw: What's the difference between an environmentalist and a developer? A developer wants to build a house in the woods. An environmentalist already lives in a house in the woods. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Response? The member for Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Madam Speaker. I will take the moment just to correct Hansard. When I was expressing condolences, it was the mother of federal Finance Minister Flaherty who passed away and the mother-in-law of our member from Oshawa—Whitby.

I want to thank the members from Dufferin—Caledon, Trinity—Spadina, Oakville and Haldimand—Norfolk for their comments. There's an interesting number of supportive quotes with regard to the introduction of Bill 99. I've got a moment so I'll just put a couple on the record.

"The introduction to this act demonstrates the province hears Lake Simcoe's cries for help. Now we need to come together to help this wonderful lake, the lands that flow into it, and the people who live here, to ensure all become in sync environmentally." That was from Annabel Slaight, the cofounder of Ladies of the Lake, in a Campaign Lake Simcoe press release dated June 17, 2008.

"A new day is dawning for Lake Simcoe. This act is very positive and we look forward to working with the government over the next nine months to make the forthcoming protection plan as strong as possible." That quote is from Dr. Rick Smith, the executive director of Environmental Defence, in a release he made on June 17, 2008.

"The Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition was created specifically to bring people and government together to work on solutions for an ailing lake. We have done it, and today I couldn't be more proud of the province and the citizens of Lake Simcoe." This quote is from Robert Eisenberg, who is the founding chair of the Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition.

Another quote: "We are pleased that the Ontario government has recognized the importance of integrated

watershed planning to ensure sustainable development within the Lake Simcoe watershed. This approach takes into consideration all the activities taking place on the land which may impact the lake itself." That was from Don Pearson, the general manager of Conservation Ontario. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. Further debate. The member for Carleton—Mississippi Mills.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I have not as much personal experience with Lake Simcoe as obviously my colleague Mr. Dunlop has, and some of the other members of this Legislature whose constituencies represent part of this lake. But I do know that Lake Simcoe is a very, very vulnerable lake, primarily because it is relatively shallow, and therefore the body of water reacts perhaps quicker to foreign substances, toxic substances, phosphorus, as had been mentioned before, than perhaps a larger body of water would.

I'm interested in this bill and the approach of the government on this particular bill, which I would put forward as a bill which sets out a consistent plan for a large area of our province—which crosses municipal boundaries—in a much better fashion than I think it did for, for instance, the greenbelt legislation. That is because it has defined what it's trying to do with regard to the protection of this, and has set up a more consistent structure, rather than coming down with a plan without, in some cases, justification for what they've done in that plan. Therefore, I think that this plan overall will sell better to the public when it hits the ground.

1640

Now, I believe very strongly in this kind of legislation, and I supported the Oak Ridges moraine legislation very much under the former Mike Harris government. As a minister, going way back to 1983, when I was in Bill Davis's cabinet, I was given responsibility for the Niagara Escarpment act and plan, which had not been implemented at that time, but I was very instrumental in bringing the final plan to fruition in the spring of 1985. In fact, in the transfer of power from the Miller government to the Peterson government, I was able to have the incoming government agree to implement that plan in June, just before they took power on June 26, because of the fact that at that time we, the previous government, had worked so hard, so long, that even the incoming government, the Peterson government, to their credit saw that it was not necessary; it would probably stall the implementation of the plan if it didn't go ahead under the former government.

But I do want to say the member for Eglinton—Lawrence made a good response with regard to the comment about giving municipalities more power in this particular piece of legislation, because my experience with the Niagara Escarpment plan was that we needed consistent regulation of the planning area, all the way from Tobermory down to Queenston in Niagara, along

the—I forget whether it's 200 or 400 kilometres of escarpment. But essentially, the need for that, and the need for consistent planning and rules all the way around Lake Simcoe and all of those tributaries to it, is indeed, drawn by fairness. It seems to me we could all agree that it would be unfair to all the rest by allowing one municipality indiscriminate development, indiscriminate use of the shore land and that kind of thing in order to gain, perhaps, property tax revenue for their small municipality. As we went through the process with the Niagara Escarpment, we found the same thing. The government said, way back in the early 1970s, "We will have a Niagara Escarpment Protection Act," which defined what the government was trying to protect on the Niagara Escarpment. When you were trying to implement this, draw lines as to the restrictions on the use of land within that Niagara Escarpment area, you at least had a piece of legislation to rely on and answer back to the property owner, answer back to the municipality that might want to attract development which wouldn't be for the good of the whole escarpment: "No, you have to live with the fact that you have the escarpment in your area, and you've got to follow the same rules all the way up and down the escarpment," all of the municipalities—I think there were five counties or regions involved in Niagara Escarpment area. Now, I don't know all of the municipalities or all of the counties involved here, but I would imagine there are probably three or four counties and a whole number of municipalities. So I support very strongly the concept of what is being done here.

Under the Niagara Escarpment process as we went through it, there were a series of stages where people could appeal what was happening to them in terms of the restriction of the use of their land. Perhaps we don't need it as much in this piece of legislation as we would have in that piece of legislation, in that this kind of effort on the part of the government now is probably into its fourth or fifth phase, you know, having gone through the Oak Ridges moraine, the greenbelt, the Niagara Escarpment. But part of the problem that the public faced, the property owner who has a piece of property in this area, is, how does he or she question the designated use of their piece of property that has come down from the experts? I would hope that the Lake Simcoe coordinating committee would have some say in that. This is included in section 18 of the bill, and I note in section 18—or sections 18 and 19, I believe. But under section 19, they outline what the committee shall do. Some of its duties are to:

"i. coordinate implementation of the Lake Simcoe protection plan, and

"ii. identify and resolve issues that arise in relation to the implementation of the Lake Simcoe protection plan."

I don't know what that power means or how they give effect to that power to resolve those disputes. Is there going to be a hearing? There could be conflicts with regard to individual property owners. There could be conflicts with regard to what a municipality wanted to do

with that particular piece of property or part of that property.

I did find, when reviewing the designation of lands in the Niagara Escarpment, and I was minister at the time, that there were situations where boundaries had been drawn too narrowly; in other words, where the Niagara Escarpment plan should increase its area in scope for better protection. And I did find areas where there were lines painted on a map which couldn't really be justified in terms of protecting that land and preventing a municipality from having that land developed and thereby attracting additional development to their area. So I don't know whether or not the coordinating committee has that like power or if there is any thought to drawing up some kind of process where either citizens or municipalities can go to them and be involved.

I also don't know whether this protection committee is going to have an administration or whether or not they are purely going to have meetings every so often and talk about the plan after it's implemented.

So there are some unanswered questions in this bill, and I look forward to the minister, either in the committee or in this Legislature, informing us about that.

Another section of the bill which draws some questions for the municipalities involved is section 7, which requires municipalities to conform to the plan. We know from previous orders, from legislation and regulations from the province under the planning acts which supersede or go over local planning, that if the province comes in and does that and asks the municipality to conform to the provincial plan, if you want to put it that way, or the Simcoe plan, then there should be some financial help to the municipalities that are affected to conform in terms of their official plan, which is the large plan for the municipality in terms of development, and also to help them re-draw their zoning bylaws to conform to this plan as well.

I don't believe that the province should have the right to go in, under this bill or any other bill, and say to municipalities, "We're coming in with a new regime, a new planning process for you, and we're going to tell you that you must restrict the use of your land in this particular area one way, but we're expecting you and the property taxpayers of your municipality to pick up the tab for that planning process that must follow."

1650

As any of us in this Legislature know who represent municipalities, and we all do, that can be a very lengthy and expensive process. Planners don't come inexpensively and, of course, there is a great deal of public consultation which usually ensues and results from that kind of endeavour.

I also noticed that in the plan there is a statement under section 6 that says that if there is conflict between the policy set out in the Lake Simcoe watershed plan and a whole number of other acts, a policy statement issued under section 3 of the Planning Act, the Greenbelt Act, the Oak Ridges Moraine Act, the growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe, a plan or policy made under

the provision of an act that is prescribed by regulations, a plan or a policy prescribed by regulations—it's sort of written backwards and forwards, but it says basically that the provision that provides the greatest protection to the ecological health of the Lake Simcoe watershed would prevail.

I understand the intent of that, and I perhaps agree with the intent of that. My question is, who's going to make the decision as to what provision prevails under all of these different kinds of conflicts that could arise? Is a minister going to give an order and say, "In this case, the Greenbelt Act prevails?" or he might say the Lake Simcoe watershed act prevails. How quickly will that response come once the question is asked? If you have two different sections saying you can use land in two different ways, then what would prevail?

I guess the other part, and the beauty of the Niagara protection act, in my view—not in the view of some of my colleagues—is that under the Niagara Escarpment protection Act, a commission was set up that was given the power to issue building permits in the Niagara Escarpment protected area. That allowed a person who had, for instance, a residence to be able to make minor changes to that residence without having to go through a great deal of difficulty to get a building permit to go ahead and do that.

Part of the problem when you set up these greater planning agencies and these greater structures that are going to be here on this committee is, what happens in the case when someone needs a very minor change to the use of their land, and how do they go about getting that? Under the present structure they would just go to the municipality and the municipality would have them go through the committee of adjustments and get a small, minor change so that they could extend their garage another two feet or whatever the minor thing is.

The problem with not having any kind of structure to deal with those particular matters is, it leads to a general hostility in the public if that story comes to light. The Niagara Escarpment Commission in its initial stages was refusing even very minor requests—if someone wanted to put a new chimney on their house and one of the commission people objected that it might harm the landscape of the Niagara Escarpment or something like this. But if you don't have some way of dealing with those very minor issues with regard to an overall plan and being able to resolve them in a fairly practical way, you will lead to stories in the local press about how onerous and burdensome this plan is to all of the people who live around Lake Simcoe. Therefore it attacks the general trust of it, which, of course, is necessary and good in my opinion. So I put those remarks forward in terms of the experience that I lived every day with regard to the Niagara Escarpment plan and was responsible for.

I will say this, and I think the member for Eglinton—Lawrence is right: This plan is necessary, and consistency in the plan is necessary as well. I don't think that you want, all the way around Lake Simcoe, different requirements of landowners if they live in one township

or the next. There's got to be consistency up and around all of that lakeshore and on the islands that are on Lake Simcoe as well. Overall, we're concerned about the general health of Lake Simcoe, and everybody has to be part of this. It can't be unfair to one landowner versus another landowner. Notwithstanding that some municipalities might want more regulation or less regulation for political purposes, you still have to be concerned with the rights of the individual landowner as well. They do have rights, and we have to be consistent with them with regard to what they can do with their land wherever that's located on this particular beautiful lake that we have in our province.

I think this is a good first look at this. I hope the minister will respond in some way to some of the issues that I have raised either privately or to this Legislature so that we can go into the committee hearings and talk about this legislation in a greater fashion.

I would also say at the very end of these remarks that while some members of this Legislature would like even more restriction or huge restrictions on this, the way to make this legislation successful, in my humble opinion, is to have it be somewhat practical with the communities that are already in existence. We have to buy them in. We have to buy Barrie in. We have to buy in the other municipalities that are involved, close to the lake. We have to say to them, "This legislation is clear. It's going to help improve your lake." But we have to be practical as well as to how we implement this law and allow them to have their say before we put the final dots on the i's and crosses on the t's to make certain we can buy them in and the other people who live around the lake as well. I'm sure they will all be supportive of this in the final analysis.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's a pleasure to spend a couple of minutes making some comments about Bill 99. We've heard over and over again from speakers from all sides of the House that we as a government need to show some initiative. I couldn't help but think that when we were dealing with the greenbelt legislation two or three years ago, the sky was going to fall in. Well, lo and behold, the legislation was passed; it's implemented. In some cases, it mirrors the Oak Ridges moraine legislation that the previous government introduced and passed to protect some of those natural resources that we have. What's happening now is that municipalities are coming forward saying, "We want to participate in the greenbelt." The minister put out a process so that municipalities could move those yardsticks forward. I just use that as a comparison, that we in this House in a non-partisan way all care about the environment we live in, and we need to protect it. In Ontario and indeed in Canada, we still have that awesome opportunity to do something about it, so I look forward to that.

I just want to spend a couple of minutes, or the rest of my time here, talking about some of these issues that I think across the province—same as with the greenbelt—

people are going to be looking at. How can we make it better?

1700

I refer to my riding of Northumberland—Quinte West and my own municipality of Brighton. We have beautiful Presqu'île park. It's a real jewel, but on the east shore, with about 150 residents, there were at one time cottages, maybe used a couple weeks of the year, and now half of them are beautiful estate homes where, I hate to say, their septic tank might still be a 45-gallon drum, because they were never changed. That's probably not uncommon. So I think that, as this evolves, we'll be able to put regulations in place, which, I think, municipalities, frankly, are going to welcome, because it's going to give them some power to help them protect the environment—not just here, but right across the province. I think this a really good step forward.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments? The member for Dufferin—Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to comment on our colleague from Carleton—Mississippi Mills because he did make reference to the fact that he implemented the Niagara Escarpment plan. I'm pleased that he talked about that because, in Dufferin—Caledon, it is very much a part of what Dufferin—Caledon is, and with very few exceptions, it is considered a jewel in my riding. As many of the members know, UNESCO designated it a world biosphere reserve in 1990, I believe it was. As I say, it defines what has become the county of Dufferin, the town of Caledon. So I like the comparison.

I want to reiterate that the reason we are talking about Bill 99 is because the greenbelt has led to some of this leapfrogging and it has caused the development problems and the pressures to come sooner to areas like my riding in Dufferin—Caledon and, of course, around Lake Simcoe. I hope that the plan, once we have an opportunity to see it and review it, becomes part of the process that the public input can be part of, because as the member from Carleton—Mississippi Mills rightly pointed out, there are good and positive ways to bring forward these plans that encompass large parts of the province. There are situations—I would venture to add that the greenbelt is one of them—where it was not as well thought out and could have been implemented in a more positive way for both the municipalities and the land-owners.

I also would like to comment and add my thought that there is assistance going to be necessary for the planning of implementing this bill. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments? Response? The member for Carleton—Mississippi Mills.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I appreciate the comments of my colleague, who has experience—Ms. Jones from Dufferin—Caledon. I know that that area, the Niagara Escarpment, is less prominent than it is in some of the other areas of our province. I think her constituents' acceptance of the restrictions with regard to their land use in her area probably would have greater objection than

anywhere else. So I'm so happy to hear that they have accepted it because the escarpment is buried in that area, for a good part of it, in Mono township and other areas. But it does show that if people are convinced of the need to preserve a piece of our heritage into the future and there is a reasonable approach, they will accept it. Therefore, I believe that that adds great credence to the fact that governments can do this if they are careful, they are thoughtful and they listen to the people who are affected.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate? The member from Trinity—Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I just wanted to take a minute to simply say that the member for Toronto—Danforth covered this theme more than adequately and more than competently. He put on the table things that we agree with and things that we disagree with. All I want to say is that that is enough for me, at least, and I wanted to indicate that. I'm looking forward to this bill going into committee, looking forward to having many experts come to speak to it and looking forward to positive improvements of the bill on the basis that maybe people are going to come and propose changes that I hope Liberals will support. So I'm looking forward to that as well.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: As always, our friend from Trinity—Spadina has contributed greatly to the debate in this chamber. I know that he will throughout the debate, and I'm sure at committee and in third reading, provide us with so many detailed suggestions to improve this piece of legislation. Usually, he talks to us about education in the province of Ontario, and I would like to know, based on his hard work on this piece of legislation, how he thinks we can best educate Ontario's students on conservation and the environment. I'm sure he has some ideas on how we can best do that here in Ontario, and he could provide some sound advice to the Minister of Education on this issue as it pertains, of course, to the Lake Simcoe Protection Act.

I might add, as I do have the floor for another minute, that this piece of legislation was first brought about—the awareness, of course—by the member from Simcoe North, our good friend and colleague Garfield Dunlop. As I mentioned previously, he has been a tremendous champion, a steward and a protector of Lake Simcoe. He believes that it's important for the next generations that this is protected. I know that my good colleague from Carleton—Mississippi Mills—and I can hardly wait to touch on, when I have my full 20 minutes, the wonderful things he was able to do as environment minister of this great province, and of course, some of the great accomplishments of the previous Progressive Conservative administrations have been the Niagara Escarpment and the Oak Ridges moraine.

Of course, we're all very proud too of our federal counterparts who are investing so much money into the sewage spill in Ottawa, and we're still waiting for the provincial government to step up to the plate.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I thought at first when he got up and it was only a few moments that he was just doing point of order or something like that. I can't believe that was actually your 20-minute rotation.

I listened carefully to your colleague's comments as well. No question, he looked at—and you said that you agree with most of what he had brought forward.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes, I did.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I think what's important is that we put up a few cautions, and we agree with that too. That's what we expect to hear when we get to committee. I don't think we can rush the bill too much even into committee because, more than anything, I know this expert panel is out there working. They've had a number of meetings. They're identifying issues. Of course, they've already been appointed.

I think one of the key things we have to be concerned about is that we don't get everything all approved, and then not know what's actually in the plan so we can't debate the plan as well. In the end, we want to have some control over what's in that plan. It's nice to have the expertise. It's nice to have lots of opinions from an assorted group of stakeholders across the province, but in the end we have to decide what's best for the citizens of the province of Ontario because we're the ones who were elected to do so right here. I don't want it to be just a carte blanche plan, but I think in the end we need to make sure that what is there for the general public is something that is accepted everywhere, and of course we want to make sure that it's environmentally sound for many generations and for our residents of Ontario for years ahead.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I didn't want to miss the opportunity to say and have it on the record that I agree with Mr. Marchese. It isn't very often. It always seems that when he's speaking and when he's giving us his sage advice, I'm in the chair and I don't have that kind of opportunity. So to Mr. Marchese I wanted to give that.

Also, I wanted to point out that it's interesting: It appears as though we all pretty much agree today with Bill 99, at least the objectives of Bill 99. I used to have a saying in my office, when I was back in business, that if we both agree, then one of us isn't necessary. I don't know that that holds true in this place, because it isn't often that we all agree. It's kind of refreshing when we do, particularly when it's on a subject such as this. I can remember when the Ladies of the Lake came to visit us, and how much work has been done by those residents and those people who are interested in Lake Simcoe and health.

I look forward to the rest of the debate on this bill that there may be, and of course when it goes to committee at there will be some added value to the bill at that time. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Thanks very much, Speaker. I'm happy as well to have an opportunity to make comments on the comments of the member from Trinity-Spadina, but also, as the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, to speak to the importance of this bill and its impact and the opportunity that the agriculture committee will have, as this bill moves through the legislative process, to ensure that the issues of the agriculture industry are considered in this legislation.

Certainly, this government has a history of paying very close attention to the issues that are raised by that sector. The agriculture sector in the Lake Simcoe region is significant indeed. In fact, over \$300 million of revenues are generated from the agriculture sector. I think anyone who drives north of Toronto through that beautiful, dark, rich Holland Landing soil is impressed and realizes how blessed we are to have such a pocket of rich agricultural land so close to an urban setting. I know that the agriculture community in the Lake Simcoe region has played an integral role in protecting the environment in that region, and I know that they will be very eager to do all they can to also share their expertise in terms of sound environmental practices so that, going forward, this lake will continue to be the jewel that it is and it will, in my view, experience even better environmental health. We hear that it is improving, but we do need to do more. I believe that the agriculture community will play an integral role in improving the quality of Lake Simcoe.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. Response, member from Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm just so delighted that in one minute of debate I was able to generate eight minutes of responses. That is unique in my experience in this Legislature. I should do this more often.

I just want to thank the member from Simcoe North for responding, the member from Caledon—God bless—the Minister of Agriculture and the member from Essex. All I said was, "Let's refer to this committee and let's listen to the experts," but that's okay.

To the member from Essex, I do want to say that I didn't completely agree with the bill. I did say that there were some issues that we want to put on the table in order to be able to improve the bill, and I'm eager to see the experts come to committee so that we could hear from them with a view to strengthening this bill. I'm hoping that will happen. I remind my colleague from Essex, for the record, that I did put some issues that we hope can be improved upon. These are that the bill eventually will adequately cover land-based policies in and beyond the watershed; that the bill, through the amendments, will allow municipalities to implement stronger standards where they wish to do so; that the bill applies to all resort development, and that includes no grandfathering of development projects that do not have final approvals and permits; and that we prohibit significant shoreline alterations or the grandfathering of such. So we make these suggestions, and we hope the member from

Essex takes them to heart and that perhaps we can strengthen this bill by looking at some of the suggestions that my colleague from Toronto—Danforth has made. We are not in complete agreement, we want to make the bill stronger, and so we hope that debate in committee will allow us to do that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: I don't think my 20 minutes will engender as much response as the member from Trinity—Spadina. It's a hard act to follow. But I think there are some things worth saying. First of all, I would hope that the minister would make available to all members a map of Lake Simcoe. If we're dealing with an important body of water that many of us know little about, it would be very helpful in the future if, when we do get information from a ministry, all members of the House would be able to see a map of the lake so we can familiarize ourselves with this great part of Ontario. I'm certainly going to tell the minister personally, and also the parliamentary secretary. That would be very helpful.

Just in terms of Lake Simcoe, the interesting thing, if you look at the map that I just got from the library here from one of the pages, it's typical of much of Ontario, where no body of water is really unto itself; it's all interconnected through aquifers, through all kinds of feeder springs and so forth. If you look at Lake Simcoe, it's not that far away from the Kawartha Lakes. As the member from Peterborough was saying, if you are going to be concerned about Simcoe and the health of Simcoe, it's going to also impact, in a positive way, on the health of the adjoining bodies of water like Balsam Lake and Dalrymple Lake, and so you're almost into the Kawarthas. This is the critical point that I think has to be made: All these bodies of water—and Simcoe is no different—really connect and are connected to the health of the ecosystems in the basin and surrounding area.

That's why this plan is going to look at a comprehensive land use approach to ensure that all the abutting municipalities etc. are part of this plan, because whatever they do in terms of sewage treatment, whatever they do with runoff of phosphorus, how they deal with their land use approvals, all has to be now—hopefully, if this bill is passed—taken into account for the lake to be healthy. I think the approach that has been taken is one that has been proven successful in the past.

We've heard about the Niagara Escarpment approach. If you look at the Niagara Escarpment, one of the reasons why we have the Niagara region, one of the premier grape-growing regions of the world, is the fact that we have the escarpment, which is protected. If you didn't have the Niagara Escarpment protection, that incredibly valuable part of tender fruit- and grape-growing area of the Niagara region would probably not be there. Some of the best grapes in the world now are grown right here in Ontario, on the bench of the escarpment, because the escarpment was protected. It's critical to make that linkage, because if we protect land that's sensitive and protect water, we protect industry. So therefore, we've

got all these jobs, we've got all this notoriety now for our grapes in Ontario, because we protected that land, and that's why we have such a thriving wine industry. I think we have over 120 wineries now in the Niagara region. We have now about 15 in Prince Edward county. We've got them now going out towards the Adolphus Reach, towards Bath and Kingston, Pelee Island, Essex, the fine wines of Leamington and area. When you protect water sources, you protect land and you also protect future industries, especially in agriculture.

As you know, just to mention agriculture for one second, one of the things that I've always said we should do in Ontario is that we should do what they're doing in many European countries, where they designate certain regions of a province as agri-tourism areas. If you go to that area, the food that you eat, the wine that you drink, the apples that you eat, the cheeses, the bed-and-breakfasts, the hotels all get designated as a local agri-tourism area so that people learn about the incredible, valuable natural products grown in that area and the hospitality, the history of food, whether it's cheese-making, wine-making or growing of certain crops. You get this designation as an agri-tourism area.

1720

It would be wonderful to designate Niagara as an agri-tourism area. The Stratford area, Huron-Bruce and Prince Edward county could be designated as agri-tourism areas. It brings incredible amounts of international tourism because we do have international fame now for many of our beautiful, natural, eco-sensitive foods that we have here in Ontario.

In this act, the one thing to remember too is that these types of comprehensive land use restrictions or land use plans are sometimes painful. In other words, we all want to do the right thing environmentally and we all want to save our planet from global warming, but it's not done without pain and suffering. It's not easy all of a sudden to reduce your carbon footprint. All of us are going to have to reduce our carbon footprint. I think you can see there are signs of it with people eating more local food. We can't keep importing food from China, importing food from all over the world. We have to eat more local products. We all benefit. Sometimes we have to go out of our way to do that. We have to maybe start eating some local squash or local beets or cabbage, but that is the type of thing we have to do to reduce our carbon footprint.

We have to start driving our cars less. Today is International Car-Free Day. That is one of the reasons I took the subway today. If the mayor of Mississauga, at 87 years of age, can take a bike seven kilometres to work, why can't we? That's why I'm saying there is a bit of pain and suffering sometimes. We have to go out of our way to reduce our carbon footprint. I really applaud the mayor of Mississauga for doing that today, for leading by example. It's the type of thing that has to be done for us to really make a change.

So in terms of the way we do things in Lake Simcoe, there is going to have to be a change, and it can't be busi-

ness as usual. You can't keep thinking of a lake as a bottomless pit. A lake is a living organism. We can't keep building monster cottages and homes on every square inch of the shores of Lake Simcoe—we can't continue to do that. We've got to keep some of the natural shoreline. It's interesting to note that earlier this summer we had the death of many of the carp in a number of bodies of water in southern Ontario. But if you notice, it wasn't just Lake Simcoe that had this problem. There was a series of bodies of water that had these dead carp. That was Sparrow Lake, Lake Couchiching, Dalrymple Lake, Young Lake, Rice Lake, the Trent River. It just demonstrates that all these bodies of water are connected. So if there is some kind of ecological challenge in one lake, more than likely it will impact on adjoining bodies of water. It goes back to my original point about how all our lakes are interconnected. Maybe many of us who live in the city weren't aware of this, but that was quite a scary thing to see these giant—these carp were almost the size of a giant garbage bag. They were dying. They'd never been seen before that large, but they came up on shore. There were hundreds of them that died because of a virus, and they're still trying to figure out exactly what it was.

These are the kinds of things that could happen to any one of our bodies of water if we don't do our due diligence to ensure that the runoff of phosphorus and all these sewage spills that occur up in Ottawa—there's millions of litres of water spewed into the Ottawa River. Petrie Island was surrounded with this for the whole summer. It's because many of us do not take the time to do our due diligence to ensure that there is protection. But protection comes with a cost and a price, and we're going to have to change some of our ways. We're going to have to be a lot stricter in terms of what we do as human beings and what our carbon footprint is, and if we don't do that—we can pass all the legislation we want, but there has to be a change in approach. This legislation really sets up a framework for this change of approach.

I've said before—and the member from Carleton—Mississippi Mills mentioned it too—how the Niagara scarpment legislation was set up. Many people to this day opposed the fact that it's too stringent, but that's what you have to do in order to protect things for the long run. You have to have provincial intervention to give people benchmarks of protection.

A few people mentioned the Oak Ridges moraine act, another piece of legislation that's very significant. I remember when I first introduced the Oak Ridges moraine legislation in this House. Most people had never even heard of the Oak Ridges moraine. They said, "Where is that marina up there?" They didn't know what moraine was. It took me about five years and I finally convinced the public—I had to walk the moraine twice to show people how important it was to protect this moraine. But we eventually encouraged the government the day to pass a version of the Oak Ridges Moraine Protection Act, which had to be done, or else we would

have had wall-to-wall sprawl, cookie-cutter homes, all the way from Pefferlaw to Snowball to the Kawartha Highlands and on and on. Anyway, that's the type of thing that can be done with good, intelligent, scientific legislation.

If you look again at the communities that surround Lake Simcoe, if you look at Barrie—when people look at the list of cities in Canada and Ontario, I think Barrie probably is about the 10th largest city in population in Canada. I remember not too long ago that Barrie used to be 30,000 people. Barrie is now one of Canada's great big cities. It is right on the shore of Lake Simcoe. So you wonder why Lake Simcoe is in a very tenuous state? Well, it could be because of this incredible growth that's taken place around Lake Simcoe, and Barrie is one example of an immensely fast-growing situation that's impacted on the life and viability of Lake Simcoe. And all around the south end—if you go through Keswick, Sutton, and Jackson's Point, at one time they were small; as the member from Peterborough said, there used to be mom-and-pop cottages down there by Roaches Point and Keswick. Now you have huge subdivisions and you've got, again, mammoth homes that are also impacting on the viability of that lake.

That kind of pressure on Lake Simcoe is enormous. One of the reasons why it's so enormous is because it's within an hour's drive from a population base of probably about four million people. People go in throngs to Lake Simcoe. Every weekend it is literally steaming with people. But somehow many parts of the lake are still extremely natural, extremely attractive, and there is great hope to protect it, because there have been a number of people who have gone out of their way—we all know about the Ladies of the Lake. We all know that there are many different proactive groups that have tried to say, "Do something to save this lake before it essentially loses all life." But now we have awareness, we have this framework legislation here that's really just the beginning. This legislation is not going to mean that the carbon footprint for Lake Simcoe is going to be reduced overnight. It really sets in motion a comprehensive plan where over the next decade there's going to be a systematic approach to ensure that sewage runoff, that the septic systems—you know, as they do their studies, it would be interesting to know how many septic systems are abutting onto Lake Simcoe and how many of them are up to standard. That's the kind of analysis that has to be done to ensure that if there are septic systems, they are—you know, we've all seen that before, where there should be a setback from water. They shouldn't be leaking. But you can just imagine: People have been living in the Lake Simcoe area for 200 years, and the condition of the septic systems, what state they are in would be very interesting. But these are the types of things.

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So the municipalities, the conservation authorities, the agricultural community, the naturalists, everybody will have a role to play in assessing the problem and finding out what the remedies are. The good news is that we are

very fortunate that most Ontarians are really beginning to be eco-conscious. In other words, they, like many of us here, know they have to do better, and they want to do better. They don't have to be forced to do it. They really just want to know what the proper way of proceeding is. So that's what the role of these frameworks will be: to demonstrate to people to, instead of taking the hazardous approach, take the environmentally friendly approach. You can do that. Instead of using soap that has phosphorus in it—you don't have to go up to your cottage and bring your laundry and bring your washing machines up to your cottage. Use less soap.

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Colle: But I'm just saying that most of us sometimes forget that we are using too many chemicals that eventually end up in the water table, in the aquifers and then end up in the lake. Whether it's fish or plant life, they can't survive if we continue to go about these very haphazard activities without thinking of the long-range consequences.

This lake is, as many people have said, a jewel in southern Ontario. I know somebody mentioned that there is Lake Superior. Lake Superior is an incredible body of water. I think someone told me that if you emptied Lake Superior you could cover all of North America one foot deep. That's how much water there is in Lake Superior. We as Ontarians are stewards of Lake Superior. We are stewards of Lake Simcoe, but Simcoe is a fairly shallow lake. I think its deepest point is 150 feet. It is not a deep lake. But it is a very unique lake because in essence it's almost in the urban envelope now. If we can save and if we can protect Lake Simcoe, it will be a real credit to the people of Ontario because it demonstrates that human habitation, agricultural activities and commercial activities can be copacetic if there is a good plan and if people are educated on what to do. Whether it's industry or commerce or whether it's the ice fishing that goes on—people come from all over North America to ice fish on Lake Simcoe ice. Many Americans have been coming there since World War II to ice fish on Lake Simcoe. You can imagine in 2001 when they had to cancel the international ice fishing championships because there was no ice. Can you believe that, Minister McMeekin? You go to Lake Simcoe and there was no ice. In fact, many of you, like the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills, know that at one time the ice from Lake Simcoe would be put into barns under hay and would be kept all winter, all summer, and that's where we would get our ice. There was a big company here in Toronto called Lake Simcoe Ice. That was ice cut out of Lake Simcoe. But in 2001, there was no ice in Lake Simcoe. If that wasn't a wake-up call for all of us, it certainly, I think, alerted the local residents that something had to be done because climate change is here. We're going to be judged not on whether or not we can stop it but on whether we care enough to try to make sure the impacts are minimized as much as possible. I want to thank everybody for listening. This is a piece of legislation that, I think, is the

legacy of what Ontario has been doing for many decades. Let's protect it and protect our future legacy.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I appreciate the brief opportunity I have at this particular time to speak to this bill. As someone who has represented the area since 1995 and has lived there for 36 years, I've had the opportunity to see the many, many changes that have taken place in the area that this bill is designed to look at. I think that there are some key issues that people need to understand, and one of them is the very complex jurisdiction. You're looking at county governments, you're looking at regional governments, you're looking at many, many municipalities, as well as city governments. So it has always been a very complex issue and obviously people looked at the fact that they had jurisdiction over a very small part. I would say that, at one time, the conservation authority actually only had jurisdiction over half the lake. So it's part of a process, then, that has gone on for many years to be able to move to this point.

But today, what we are looking at is obviously the work of many, many volunteers and many organizations that have come together and put the pressure on government to look at how we might move forward. As I said, I have the opportunity to speak further. I only wanted to be on the record today to indicate to you how complex—and the fact that we've layered things like the greenbelt, the IGAP process, the Places to Grow, so you have all these layers, water-taking and water resources, nutrient management. There are about four or five pieces of legislation that have all been layered on top of this area, and that really is part of the challenge that we must face in this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Just to comment, the member for Eglinton-Lawrence did pick up on and continued a theme that I've been hearing this afternoon with respect to population growth and its impact on that particular area on that watershed. Of course, many presenters have talked about phosphorus loading and also the need to manage projected population growth going up to something like 600,000 people by the year 2021. I guess the elephant in the room that this legislation wouldn't deal with is how to slow down that growth or how to stop that growth. There seems to be an assumption that those large numbers of people are coming up to the watershed anyway and that will bring us the accompanying decline in air quality and water quality and noise and everything else that goes with it.

Secondly, as the human population increases, we will see a decline in the population of other species. Farmland will be bought up. There will continue to be a decline in farming and the number of farmers. We'll see more flooding, and as a result, more municipal overflows of sewage into the water that we're talking about protecting here. There are some estimates, and much of the growth will be Barrie and Orillia, the towns of Aurora, Bradford, Keswick, Innisfil, Newmarket and Queensville, and as I

indicated, 600,000 people. Is this legislation enough, will the attendant regulations be enough, to deal with a massive increase in population like that, or is there an alternative approach?

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments? The member for Northumberland—Quinte West.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Once again, I take the opportunity to comment on Bill 99. I think we've heard over and over again the benefits that this is going to have, not just to the issue at hand, Lake Simcoe, but the ramifications across the province. I think once we have something working in an area—I mean, this is something that we'll be able to use as a tool. I made reference to Presqu'île Provincial Park in my riding, which has a residential component—about 150 lots; some of them are permanent homes, probably half or better. That was back 50 or 60 years ago.

The other area that I want to talk about—and I share this area, the south side of Rice Lake, and on the north side is my good friend from Peterborough. Basically the same conditions apply there. It's a very restricted land mass, where there are some buildings. More so in Rice Lake, there is more of a resort and fishing camps, where those systems are taxed a little bit more and used a little bit more than the residential ones. I know that in the five years that I've had the opportunity to represent that area in my riding, there's the odd issue that comes up, like quality of water and some other issues. We're very fortunate in Rice Lake because it's a very, very clean lake. It has a good fishing industry. It's the livelihood of a lot of people and it attracts a lot of folks. But I dread the day that we can't do that anymore at Rice Lake. So the preventive maintenance we can implement today will keep the sustainability of not only the industry but the environment around that particular piece of Ontario. So I look forward to this legislation going through.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments. The member for Parry Sound—Muskoka.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to add some comments on the speech by the member from Eglinton—Lawrence to do with Bill 99. I previously had a chance to relate this back to the riding of Parry Sound—Muskoka. I know this bill is about Lake Simcoe and trying to help clean up Lake Simcoe, largely because of the build-up of development and too much phosphorus in the lake, and I point out that in Parry Sound—Muskoka we have a similar situation north of Parry Sound and Pointe au Baril, on Sturgeon Bay and Georgian Bay. There, they've had problems with blue-green algae blooms. The Sturgeon Bay Pointe au Baril Ratepayers Association and the Township of the Archipelago have been involved in meeting with the Ministry of the Environment, and they've identified a technology to help improve the situation, which is called Phoslock. I will quote from the letter that I received from the president of the association, where he says:

"Phoslock has recently been used in Lake Simcoe to remediate the watershed and reduce the phosphorus loads

of this water body. According to the article in the King City newspaper a few weeks ago, your ministry assisted the Lake Simcoe in the use of Phoslock with a \$250,000 contribution towards the project. Your assistant Kevin Flynn was quoted as saying 'the government support of this project is a sign of how important the protection of Lake Simcoe is.'"

The point that the president is making is that they're asking for the same treatment for Sturgeon Bay: "We are asking for the same government resolve to assist our situation on Sturgeon Bay. Members of the water quality action committee have long called our bay the 'canary in the coal mine,' a perfect location to test the efficacy of the Phoslock product."

So this is what I'm looking for for the area of Sturgeon Bay on Georgian Bay. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Response? The member for Eglinton—Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: I want to thank the members for their comments. The thing I think for all of us to remember is that there is no quick fix here, but there is a plan to study and find out what the remedies are. The remedies are not always that simple, but this approach is the one that will be comprehensive and long-lasting, and if it's done right, it will protect this body of water and bring it back to where it should be. But it's going to take the co-operation of all the partners. It's going to take the co-operation of the landowners, their cultural community, the urban mayors, the councillors, the cottagers, the boaters—everybody has to play a role. Essentially, as I said, everybody is going to have to decide to reduce their carbon footprint. So if you're filling up your huge mega motorboat with \$2,000 worth of gas, you're going to maybe have to think about going down to a sailboat or going down to rowing your canoe. Not that everybody should do that, but I'm saying that those are the kinds of changes we're going to have to make when we use this lake, because that lake is very fragile. Whether we're building a home or building a business, whatever use we're making of the lands surrounding Lake Simcoe, we're all going to have to be a lot more sensitive that this is a fragile ecosystem. If we don't take care of it, we'll not only harm the fish and the aquatic life, but we'll have an effect on everything from air quality to just the appreciation and the quality of life for everybody who lives in southern Ontario, not only on the shores of Lake Simcoe. So we all have a lot at stake here. As I said, it's not the biggest lake in Ontario, it's not Lake Huron, but it's a heck of a beautiful little lake that deserves all our love and care. Let's protect it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate? The member for Nepean—Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): I'm sorry. It being 5:45 of the clock, I now declare the House adjourned, to be reconstituted tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The House adjourned at 1747.

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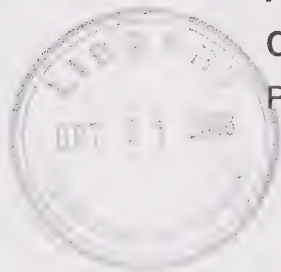
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of Ontario**

First Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 39^e législature



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Tuesday 23 September 2008

Mardi 23 septembre 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
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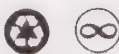
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 23 September 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 23 septembre 2008

*The House met at 0900.
Prayers.*

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INCREASING ACCESS TO QUALIFIED HEALTH PROFESSIONALS FOR ONTARIANS ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 VISANT À ACCROÎTRE L'ACCÈS DES ONTARIENNES ET DES ONTARIENS AUX PROFESSIONNELS DE LA SANTÉ QUALIFIÉS

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 22, 2008, on the motion for second reading of Bill 97, An Act to increase access to qualified health professionals for all Ontarians by amending the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 / Projet de loi 97, Loi visant à accroître l'accès des Ontariennes et des Ontariens aux professionnels de la santé qualifiés en modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate? The member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure this morning to talk to this House about Bill 97, An Act to increase access to qualified health professionals for all Ontarians by amending the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991. Let me start by saying that the NDP has a proud history in Canada of leading efforts to improve access to public health care by all people. We welcome this new legislation as we would welcome any legislation that will improve the effectiveness of our public health care system, of medicare. As you know, medicare is now a defining value of the Canadian people, and of Ontarians as well.

The stated purpose of the bill is to ensure that Ontarians have access to adequate numbers of competent health professionals. It provides a framework for the government to work with regulatory colleges to increase access to health professionals. In the title of the bill it says, "to qualified health professionals," but if you look down into the bill, it actually seems to focus more on working with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, the CPSO, and its aim is to increase the supply of physicians to Ontario to serve the people of Ontario. Actually, actions are already under way at the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, and as early as last week they announced a plan to bring hundreds of more phy-

sicians to Ontario by allowing physicians licensed in other provinces in Canada and some from the US to practise here.

J'aimerais vous donner un exemple concret. Moi, l'année dernière, jusqu'à l'élection du mois d'octobre, j'étais la directrice générale du Centre de santé communautaire de Sudbury. Bien entendu, nous avons plusieurs postes de médecin au centre de santé communautaire. Mais je me souviens de plusieurs défis que l'on a eus. Entre autres, je me souviens du D^r Frenette. D^r Frenette avait fait ses études au Québec. Son mari était professeur à l'Université Laurentienne, qui est également située à Sudbury. Le couple, D^r Frenette et son mari, voulaient s'établir à Sudbury. Elle était venue en entrevue et avait passé l'entrevue pour être embauchée comme médecin au Centre de santé communautaire de Sudbury. Tout allait bien.

Mais tout n'était pas bien. Sans vous donner les détails, cela a pris deux ans entre le temps qu'on avait fait contact avec D^r Frenette et le temps qu'elle a pu commencer à pratiquer à Sudbury et avoir des patients et à recevoir sa licence du Collège des médecins et chirurgiens de l'Ontario, un processus qui était très ardu.

C'est un exemple à Sudbury. Mais je peux vous dire qu'à Cornwall, à Témiscamingue, à Toronto, à Welland, dans d'autres centres de santé communautaires de la province qui desservent les francophones, on recevait assez régulièrement des demandes d'emploi de médecins du Québec qui voulaient venir pratiquer chez nous. Les cinq centres que je vous ai nommés sont des centres qui ont comme mandat de desservir la population francophone. Donc ils étaient intéressés par des médecins qui pouvaient desservir leur population en français, et plusieurs de ceux-là venaient du Québec.

C'était tellement ardu pour eux, même si c'étaient des médecins qui pratiquaient en bonne et due forme, qui avaient leur licence, qui avaient leur droit de pratique. Certains pratiquaient à Hull et Gatineau. Ils avaient des collègues à Ottawa, mais parce qu'ils avaient fait leurs études au Québec, c'était un processus très ardu et difficile pour eux de venir pratiquer en Ontario. Puis pourtant le type de pratique entre Gatineau et Ottawa pour un médecin de famille est pas mal identique. Ils utilisent les mêmes spécialistes, les mêmes hôpitaux de soins tertiaires et quaternaires, etc., mais la licence du Québec n'était pas reconnue par le Collège des médecins et chirurgiens de l'Ontario.

I wanted to give an example as to how hard it was for a physician who was trained in another province to come—In Ontario we have five community health

centres that have as their target population the franco-phone population. In order to serve the Franco-Ontarians of this province, you need to have physicians who are competent in French and in English, because the rest of the health care system of course is in English, so you have to have physicians who are bilingual. We would often get physicians who had trained in Quebec who were interested in coming to practise in one of those five centres. The process for them to be recognized in Ontario was so difficult that at some point the five francophone community health centres actually worked together and hired a consultant to help do the transition, but even then, when you had people specializing in recruitment and trying to help them come into Ontario, it was still like a year-long process, a process of over 12 months, and often two years, to have ready-to-practise physicians who practise in Quebec come and be recognized in Ontario. It was really hard. So this has to change, and this is what this bill, Bill 97, will do.

0910

On the surface, who can argue that? Especially when we know that hundreds of thousands of people in Ontario do not have access to a family physician, it is a good bill. But while the number of physicians per Ontarian has not dropped significantly over the past few years, we know that many physicians are on the verge of retirement and that we need to plan ahead. We need a health human resources plan. I will talk about this a little bit longer in a few minutes.

The bill will quite likely increase the number of physicians who practise in Ontario, and that will be a good thing. The NDP will support the bill based on that simple fact. But we need to recognize that this bill will not, on its own, lead to improved access to quality care for those who need it the most. Here, again, I will explain what I mean by that.

I would like to quote from Dr. Michael Rachlis, an expert on health care in Canada. He recently said, "Even if the numbers of doctors doubled, unless we were to change the structure in which they work, Canadians would still have inadequate access." And this is if you double the number of physicians in Canada or, in this case, in Ontario. This bill will by no means double the number of practising physicians in this province. We have about 23,000 right now. It will increase it, and that will be good, but it won't double. Unless we change the structure in which physicians work, and provide primary care and tertiary care, Canadians and Ontarians will continue to have problems of access. We can support this bill, but it is only one small part of a comprehensive strategy to improve access.

I would like to talk about a range of other actions that are also needed. Some of them will be supported by this bill and some of them need to be worked on.

First, and I've mentioned this, it is important to develop a health human resource strategy that will first of all project the needs for professionals, and that will work to ensure that there is an adequate supply of physicians and other providers. Right now, if you go to different

parts of Ontario, a lot of them know that there is a shortage, but they wouldn't be able to tell you the mix and what quantity for a specific area. In underserved areas, you have a pretty good idea of how many more physicians you need. But how many midwives? How many nurse practitioners? How many physiotherapists, occupational therapists, pharmacists, nurses and personal support workers? The list goes on. And how do they influence one another? This comprehensive health human resources plan has not been done.

As part of this, we need to enhance the supply of physicians and improve and speed up the integration of internationally trained physicians to Ontario. Certainly this bill, the spirit of this bill, this co-operation that will be put into place between the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, will lead us toward that. But this has to be done in an ethical way. We have some internationally trained physicians here in Ontario. But we must not actively, what I call, poach physicians from developing countries which have an even greater need for their physicians than we do. I realize that everybody in Ontario should have access to primary care and should have access to a physician. But to go and poach those physicians from countries that are in greater need than us is something that our party would not support.

There are good reasons to immigrate to Ontario. Ontario is a great province to live in, to raise your family in. It is a great place to live; I think everybody in this House agrees. We should not try to prevent immigration—that's not what I'm saying—but there's a difference between being a welcoming province and poaching physicians out of countries, especially developing countries that need them even more than we do.

There has to be some kind of code of conduct associated with this new partnership between the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario. There are examples in other provinces, and I would invite the ministry to look at the dialogue going on in Saskatchewan for the recruitment of health professionals overseas. The Ontario Nurses' Association also has a code of conduct developed for their profession, for nurses working in developing countries, to prevent what we call poaching. Our aim in Ontario should be to become self-sufficient—self-sufficient in training the types and numbers of health professionals, as we have pledged to do with other provinces under the national framework on health human resources, which Ontario is a part of.

I am really proud to be from Sudbury. We have the honour of having the newest school of medicine, the Northern Ontario Medical School. The school will be giving us their first graduates at the end of this school year, which will be in 2009. Fifty-six new physicians will be graduating with the training they receive at the Northern Ontario Medical School. It was the first medical school to be built in more than two generations, and it was built in northern Ontario. The whole curriculum is done in a way that prepares those physicians to work in

rural and northern areas of this province, which have for many years been so underserved. It is a great asset for recruitment and a great asset for retention of physicians in northern Ontario, something that everybody in northern Ontario is very proud of.

À Sudbury, nous avons l'honneur d'être l'endroit où la nouvelle école de médecine du nord de l'Ontario s'est établie. La nouvelle école nous donnera nos premiers médecins, nos premiers gradués, pendant cette année; c'est-à-dire, au printemps 2009. Au printemps 2009, nous aurons 56 nouveaux médecins qui vont avoir reçu leur entraînement dans le nord de l'Ontario. Ces médecins-là seront prêts à relever les défis spécifiques à la pratique de la médecine en région rurale et dans le nord de l'Ontario. C'est quelque chose qui nous rend très fiers, et l'école de médecine va aider autant au recrutement qu'à la rétention des professionnels de la santé dans notre province et dans notre partie de la province. C'est quelque chose dont nous sommes très fiers, et c'est certainement un autre gros pas pour s'assurer que le nord de l'Ontario a le type et le nombre de professionnels dont ils ont besoin pour desservir la population du nord de l'Ontario et des autres régions rurales de la province.

The second action that also needs to be done is, we need to improve the distribution of physicians. This should not be done through coercion, but through recruiting students from rural areas and improving the working conditions of physicians who work in rural and northern areas. For example, fewer doctors are willing to work 70 hours a week. I had an e-mail yesterday in my inbox from a physician from Fergus that basically talked to this. He has a young family and he's presently working 70 hours a week. This is not the type of lifestyle he would want. More and more physicians have spouses who also work. They have children and they need to be active parents. To be an active parent means that you have to be available and at home for your family.

0920

We need to find models that respect this work-life balance. Physicians cannot spend seven hours of their day talking to their patients and telling them, "In order to be healthy, you have to maintain a healthy work-life balance," and then turn around and not do that for themselves. That would be hypocrisy. If you really believe that in order to be healthy you have to lead a healthy life, and that includes a healthy balance between your work and life, then you also have to live it.

We have to add to this that more than half of the graduating physicians are women. That is a huge change from a generation ago. When I went to school, it was still very skewed the other way. There were way more men going into medicine. Now we have a healthy balance. It looks pretty much like half and half—a few more women. These women will have maternity leaves and will need to be replaced while on maternity leave, and have to be respected for their choice to be active in their children's lives.

La conciliation travail-famille, c'est pour tout le monde. Ce n'est pas seulement pour les travailleurs; c'est

pour les médecins également. Pour assurer une distribution équitable du nombre de médecins partout dans la province, ce n'est pas en les obligeant, c'est vraiment en leur donnant un espace de travail qui va respecter leurs besoins comme individus, comme membres d'un couple et comme parents d'une famille, et ça inclut la conciliation travail-famille. Tu ne peux pas passer sept heures de ta journée à parler à tes patients, en leur disant, « Bien, si vous voulez être en santé, vous devez vous assurer de concilier travail-famille », et se retourner de bord et travailler 70 ou 80 heures par semaine. Il faut que tu vives. Sinon, ça devient une hypocrisie, cette affaire-là.

Donc, pour les médecins, c'est important de leur offrir des opportunités de travail qui vont leur permettre d'avoir une vie satisfaisante à l'extérieur du travail—leur permettre d'avoir un travail satisfaisant, c'est certain, mais leur permettre d'avoir une vie, une vie de famille.

On doit également s'assurer que nos médecins « focus » sur la médecine. Cela veut dire s'assurer que chacun des professionnels de la santé travaille dans son champ de pratique; donc, les médecins pratiquent la médecine; les infirmières praticiennes ont leur champ de pratique; les infirmières, la même chose. Qu'on parle de la nutritionniste, de la travailleuse sociale, etc., que les médecins puissent travailler en équipe et être entourés d'une équipe qui permet à chacun de travailler même à son champ de pratique.

Je vous donne un exemple. Un médecin qui pratique en médecine solo—si un drame se passe dans la famille, quelqu'un perd un être cher, souvent il y a des problèmes de sommeil, il y a des problèmes de deuil. Qu'est-ce que tu fais ? Tu vas voir ton médecin de famille, parce que tu as besoin d'aide. Le médecin de famille, ou la femme-médecin, va t'écouter, va pouvoir t'aider, va peut-être prescrire quelque chose pour t'aider à mieux dormir. Mais vraiment, la personne qui est la mieux qualifiée pour t'aider à vivre ton deuil, c'est la travailleuse sociale; ce n'est pas nécessairement le médecin. Donc, quand on offre une pratique de groupe, une pratique interdisciplinaire, bien que tu aies peut-être fait un rendez-vous pour venir voir ton médecin parce que tu viens chercher de l'aide, l'équipe multidisciplinaire va te rediriger vers la travailleuse sociale, qui, elle, va être capable de t'aider à vivre ton deuil, ce qui est souvent quelque chose de très difficile.

La même chose : quelqu'un qui vient d'être diagnostiqué avec le diabète. C'est sûr qu'un médecin peut t'aider à gérer ton diabète et a un rôle très important à jouer à t'aider à gérer cette maladie que tu as. Mais l'infirmière praticienne a également un rôle, la nutritionniste-diététiste a également un rôle, parce qu'on connaît l'importance de la nutrition pour bien gérer le diabète. Encore là, ça pointe vers l'importance de s'assurer que nos médecins en Ontario travaillent dans des équipes interdisciplinaires pour que tu aies accès à la personne la mieux qualifiée pour t'aider, que tu y aies accès à une équipe interdisciplinaire.

The third point that will go along with improving access is that we need to ensure that physicians do what

they are best at doing, that is, practising medicine, and that other professionals also take on their roles on the interdisciplinary team. We need to make sure that physicians are doing what they do best and that other providers, such as nurse practitioners, take their rightful place on the health care team.

The flu season is about to come upon us. I would say that it's probably at our doorstep as we speak. Ontario has this beautiful program for flu shots, and more and more Ontarians are taking advantage of this free program and getting their flu shots. A flu shot is something that a nurse practitioner is perfectly capable of giving—and I would add that they are probably the best at giving the flu shots—but yet, for a physician who doesn't work in a team practice, it will be the physician who gives the flu shot. To me, it could be a better use of our health care resources to have physicians work as part of a team.

The same thing happens if—and I don't want to wish any harm on anybody—somebody in your family dies. You go through the grieving process. Most of the time you will reach out for help because you don't sleep well, you don't feel good and you're grieving. You go seek that help from your family physician. And your family physician will talk to you and maybe prescribe something to help you sleep better. Really, the health professional who is most qualified to help you through the grieving process is the social worker, but unless that social worker is part of that team, unless that physician works as part of a team, you won't have access to the best health care professional that is most suitable to help you through this grieving process. Same thing with diabetes: Physicians have an important role to play for people to help them manage their diabetes and help them through this chronic disease. They have a part to play. But other health providers are also very important. You should have access to a nutritionist-dietician, and you should have access to a nurse to help you manage.

The third part to really improve access and make a difference, so that everybody in Ontario has access to primary care, is that physicians have to be an integral part of an interdisciplinary team where they are co-workers with dietitians, nurse practitioners, nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech pathologists, health promoters etc. Then will we guarantee that everybody—every health professional—gets to work within their full scope of practice.

The fourth piece of the puzzle is that we need to recognize that physicians are not the only health professionals lacking.

Nous devons reconnaître que la pénurie de travailleurs dans la santé ne se limite pas aux médecins. Si une famille essaie de se trouver une sage-femme, bien, tu dois te mettre sur la liste d'attente de bonne heure. Mets-toi sur la liste d'attente le soir que cet enfant-là est créé, parce que les listes d'attente pour les sages-femmes sont extrêmement longues en Ontario.

I was giving the example that physicians are not the only health practitioners that are in short supply. Try, for example, to gain access to a midwife. This is something

that is very difficult. Some people would say you need to sign up pretty well the night you conceive; this is how long the waiting lists are. While we have increased the number of seats in medical schools, we have lagged behind in training nurses, nurse practitioners, midwives—and the list goes on. Ontario has the second-lowest number of nurses per capita in Canada, yet we are still seeing nurses being laid off in hospitals. As with physicians, we are not training the right amount of nurses to meet the needs of Ontarians.

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This bill, Bill 97, speaks, rightly, about access to health professionals. It seems to be very focused on physicians in its implementation. But the bill in itself has an opportunity to influence the relationship between the Ministry of Health and all of the colleges of the different health professions in Ontario.

Le projet de loi, Loi de 2008 visant à accroître l'accès des Ontariennes et des Ontariens aux professionnels de la santé qualifiés, parle de tous les professionnels, et pour nous c'est quelque chose d'important. C'est important non seulement d'augmenter le nombre de médecins, et certainement ce projet de loi parle en détail au sujet de la relation entre le Collège des médecins et chirurgiens de l'Ontario et le ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée, mais on espère qu'il aura une portée beaucoup plus large que ça et qu'on aura également ce type de dialogue avec les autres collèges, que ce soit avec le collège des infirmières, le collège des sages-femmes, les collèges des pharmaciens, des physiothérapeutes, etc, pour que l'Ontario ait le bon nombre de professionnels de la santé pour s'occuper de la santé des Ontariens et des Ontariennes.

Fifth, we need to better understand the needs of Ontarians who are currently without access, without a physician. We hear that there are now half a million—500,000—Ontarians without a physician. My colleague from Kitchener-Waterloo yesterday used the number of a million people without access. I think that has to do with the number of people who are seeking access to a family physician but don't—and the other one speaks to the total number of Ontarians who do not have a family physician.

This number is very high, but what do we know about these people? We know that many of those Ontarians live in rural Ontario, where there are no services at all. I have a small community in my riding, Coniston, where the sole physician left his practice in May. He was Dr. Noel de Tilly. He was a very good physician who served that community very well. He had tried to retire for many, many years, tried to find somebody else to come and work in Coniston, but after a while just gave up and left that community without a physician at all. There are a number of communities like this throughout Ontario, in rural Ontario, where there are no other services around.

That's one group, but there are also other groups. There are the immigrants, people from different cultural backgrounds who can't get access to a physician they are comfortable with. Sometimes, depending on your cultural background, you would prefer to have a woman phy-

sician. Other groups that are a part of those people, those Ontarians without access to primary care, without access to a physician, are marginalized people, low-income people, homeless people and people who are transient or unable to establish and maintain a relationship with one physician. Within that group, there are a lot of people who are seriously sick. They may have a diagnosis of cancer; they may have a number of chronic diseases they are trying to manage. Lots of them may have a mental illness. They need access to primary care, they need access to a physician, but they don't have it. They make up the vast majority of those people without a physician in Ontario.

Others might be people who are healthy. Those are the people not seeking a family physician, and they don't usually visit a family physician. So if you're a young man listening out there, I guess I'm talking to you. There are lots of young men who don't go to see a family physician, don't seek one, but they make up those one million people who don't have access to a family physician.

We need to aggressively pursue models of delivery that will increase access to every Ontarian, including those groups I'm talking about—people living in rural areas, marginalized, low-income, recent immigrants, homeless people, transient people. Indeed, if we are truly concerned about access to care by all groups and quality of care for all people, we need to remember that community health centres, which involve genuine partnerships between physicians and a range of other health care professionals, are best at providing quality care to hard-to-reach populations—people in rural or remote areas, recent immigrants, low-income and homeless people.

Dans un centre de santé communautaire, les différentes parties du centre font qu'ils ont très bien l'habileté à desservir la population qui a le plus de difficulté à avoir accès aux soins primaires et avoir un médecin de famille. Un centre de santé communautaire offre toujours les soins primaires. Les soins primaires, c'est les soins qui sont offerts par les médecins, infirmiers praticiens, infirmiers nutritionnistes, travailleurs sociaux, etc. Ils offrent également la promotion de la santé. Donc, on va y retrouver des gens qui font la promotion de la santé, qui peuvent offrir des cours sur différentes maladies chroniques, que l'on parle de la gestion de l'asthme, du diabète, de l'hypertension, des cours préparatoires à l'accouchement, ce type de choses.

Mais on a également des gens qui se spécialisent en développement communautaire pour travailler spécifiquement avec la population desservie par le centre de santé. Ça permet d'être proactif. Ça permet d'identifier les personnes qui sont à risque pour avoir les problèmes de santé, et ce qu'on peut changer dans la communauté pour rendre nos communautés plus en santé. On peut avoir toutes sortes de choses : travailler sur la pauvreté, qui est le déterminant numéro un de la santé. En développement communautaire, ils peuvent également travailler pour s'assurer qu'on a des parcs, que la population a accès à des trottoirs, des choses comme ça, pour rendre nos rues plus sécuritaires.

I was mentioning that if we really care about access to all groups, especially the hard-to-serve, then we need to have a look at community health centres. Community health centres, by their makeup, are best suited to improve access. Community health centres always have primary health care teams. This is where you will find physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, dietitians and social workers all working together to provide access, to provide primary care.

But community health centres also have two more sides to them. They always have health promotion activities. So the health promotion activities could focus, depending on the population they serve, on the homeless, if they're in an area where there are a lot of homeless people without access. If there is lots of chronic disease—diabetes, high blood pressure, asthma—the health promoters can work to help manage those chronic diseases. So this is an idea of what goes on within health promotion.

A community health centre also has a third component, which is community development. Community development is where you will see the proactive activities that deal with the determinants of health. We all know that when you're sick, it is very important to have access to somebody to help you, to have access to primary care, but it is through working through the determinants of health that you will keep people healthy, and community health centres have teams of community development workers who work on those determinants of health. To give you an example, poverty is the number one determinant of health. The poorer you are, the sicker you are. You are sick more often, longer, and you access the health care system more. The more your income rises, the healthier you are. So in the community development part, you could see activities to fight poverty; you could see activities to keep people healthy, if it's through lack of exercise; or to bring in healthy nutrition in schools or different segments of the population.

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So we have to wonder, why isn't this government moving more quickly to increase community health centres? We also want to know—it is important: As I said, the bill will bring us more physicians, and this is something we support. But we also have to look at increasing the scope of practice—and the responsibilities of other health professionals within the team.

Certainly, nurse practitioners are a group of health care providers, health care professionals, who have put forward submissions to increase their scope of practice so they can better serve their clients' primary health care needs. But there are a lot of other professionals, whether we think about the optometrists, who also have put forward changes to their regulatory college so that they can increase their scope of practice, and that goes for most professions. Physiotherapists are another one, and occupational therapists. If you allow physicians to work in a model of an interdisciplinary team, and you expand the scope of practice of all of those professionals within the team, you will increase access to primary care to

everybody in Ontario, which, at the end of the day, I think, is what we're trying to do.

Ontario has about 10,000 family physicians, but we only have 600 primary care nurse practitioners. This ratio has to change. I can tell you that in smaller rural areas, where I practised for most of my life, a lot of physicians would tell you that one physician to five nurse practitioners would be the greatest ratio. Well, we're a long way from there, when we look at 10,000 primary care physicians and 600 primary health care nurse practitioners. Those ratios also have to be looked at.

If we are serious about improving quality of care, improving access to care and improving affordability of care, why aren't we radically increasing the supply of other health professionals as well: the supply of nurse practitioners, health promoters, community development workers, social workers, midwives, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech pathologists, optometrists, and the list goes on?

Why are we making such slow progress in building new community health centres? Almost 50 new community health centres, or new satellite community health centres, were announced, but those are really, really slow at getting the support they need from this ministry to get up and running.

Why are we in Ontario so far behind Quebec, which has for a long time had a comprehensive network of community health centres? In the entire province of Quebec, every resident in Quebec has access to a community health centre in their community. Ontario is a long way from this. Yet we know that they have been recognized by the Ontario Health Quality Council as the best model, the best primary care model, to provide access and quality care, following best practice in primary care.

En sixième lieu, j'aimerais vous parler des dossiers électroniques. Encore là, on pourrait grandement améliorer l'accès et la gestion du système de santé et des soins primaires en mettant sur pied un dossier électronique. Cela s'en vient en Ontario, le dossier électronique, mais certains diraient que cela s'en vient à la vitesse d'une tortue endormie. Ce n'est pas très rapide.

Sixth, we need to better manage patient access to care. We are falling behind other provinces, like Saskatchewan, for example, in implementing the electronic patient management system, which can greatly improve efficiencies, provide better patient management and cut wait times for accessing physicians and other health care providers.

Finally, we need to put into place what the NDP calls the second stage of medicare. We need to focus our attention on preventing disease, promoting good health practices and creating communities with resources for good health—community centres, recreational centres, child care centres, education, community involvement and of course a clean environment—the basic determinants of health. We are trailing behind other provinces in implementing social and economic policies that improve and protect health in the first place.

Here again, I have to mention poverty. Poverty is the number one determinant of health. People that are poor are sicker more often and for longer periods of time. You can stack up all of your bad genes, bad luck, bad habits; no matter what they are, they don't hold a candle to poverty. Poverty is the biggest determinant of health. So if we want to have an impact and bring the health of the population of Ontario up a couple of notches, we have to be serious about addressing poverty, and we have to do this quickly. Addressing poverty will have a direct impact on the number of times and the length of time that people access our health care system, which plays to the demand side of the health care equation rather than the supply, although I realize that this bill has to do with supply. But I had to mention it, it is such an important point.

Why don't we have a high-level government committee assessing the health impact of our social and economic strategy like they do in Saskatchewan? Put the government strategy through a determinants-of-health lens to see how you can have an impact on the health of your population. Ontarians want opportunity and support to live healthy and productive lives. If they get sick, they want timely access to good-quality and effective health care. As politicians, we have a duty to strive for a health care system that, first of all, aims to keep people healthy, and second, provides good care when people are sick at an affordable and sustainable cost. But let's not forget that our primary duty is to keep people healthy, to put forward policies that will help keep Ontarians healthy.

Unfortunately, as Steven Lewis—not the one working in Africa, but the former head of the Romanow commission—has said, “We had focused more on ramping up volume, rather than improving quality of care and health outcomes.” So we hear this government talk about more; more, for some reason, is assumed by government to be better. Not all the time. The McGuinty government seems to have a little bit of a “more is better” mantra. More spending: a 55% increase in spending over the last seven years. More doctors: twice as many new doctor certificates in 2007 as there were in 1997. More procedures: a 20% increase in MRI exams in the last two years alone. Meanwhile, recent reports indicate that all of the “more of all this” has only made modest improvements in reducing wait times, modest improvements in improving quality of care and modest improvements in improving health outcomes. The most recent health quality council report indicates that some wait times have been reduced—cancer surgery, hip and knee replacements, CT scans—but others have not. Under this “more is better” strategy, wait times for cardiac bypasses, for MRIs, for emergency room care have not decreased, and quality of care has not improved very much. Add to this that patient satisfaction rates with acute care and emergency department care have not improved at all. The June 2008 report from the Change Foundation found that two in five Ontarians did not have access to the information they need, and they did not feel that their time was valued by the health care system. One in two Ontarians are unsure who is leading their care.

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The 2007 Conference Board report found that Ontario has the second-worst satisfaction rate for hospital care and the lowest satisfaction rate among women for community care of all provinces in Canada—not a very good record. In terms of medical outcomes, death rates from heart attacks, childhood asthma and diabetes have persisted. Our health care system is clearly not doing well in reducing risk factors for illnesses. I must say that smoking rates have fallen very slightly—but it's still good; it's still a good thing; it's a step in the right direction. But far too many adults and children, and often young children, are overweight and obese. Far too many Ontarians do not exercise. And far too many of us eat poor diets. I've just named the three basic determinants of health: stop smoking, exercise regularly, maintain a healthy weight and have a good diet. How come we're not working on those basics, those fundamentals of good health?

Dans mon dernier point, je voulais vous parler de ce qu'on appelle le deuxième stage, la deuxième étape du système de santé publique, l'étape qui nous permet de garder les gens en santé. On parle ici de la promotion de la santé, de la prévention de la maladie. On sait que la province de l'Ontario est un peu en arrière des autres provinces quand on regarde la mise en place de nos politiques sociales et économiques, qui pourraient avoir un gros impact sur la santé des gens.

Le numéro un de tous les déterminants de la santé est la pauvreté. Si on est capable d'avoir un impact sur la pauvreté, on aura un impact encore beaucoup plus grand sur notre système de santé. Les gens qui vivent dans la pauvreté sont malades plus souvent et plus longtemps, et ils ont besoin du système de santé plus souvent et plus longtemps.

On a une opportunité en ce moment de changer ça. Un de mes collègues parlait hier de quatre propositions qui ne coûteraient absolument rien au gouvernement et qui auraient un impact majeur et significatif pour aider à sortir les gens de la pauvreté. On commence par augmenter le salaire minimum à 10,25 \$. Ça ne coûterait rien au gouvernement. Mais tous les travailleurs qui travaillent en ce moment à temps plein, à l'année longue, au salaire minimum, vivent dans la pauvreté. Augmenter le salaire minimum à 10,25 \$ en ce moment leur permettrait de vivre au-dessus du seuil de la pauvreté, mais ça leur permettrait également d'augmenter leur niveau de santé.

Si tu regardes, la corrélation est directe : plus le niveau de revenu augmente, plus en santé sont les gens de l'Ontario; plus l'Ontario mettra des politiques financières et sociales pour aider les gens à se sortir de la pauvreté, plus les gens vont être en santé. La corrélation est directe et elle augmente tant et aussi longtemps que le revenu augmente. C'est une opportunité à ne pas manquer.

Il y a d'autres opportunités, des opportunités pour l'Ontario de faire une différence envers tous les gens, adultes ou enfants, qui ont des problèmes de poids ou qui sont carrément obèses; tous les gens, adultes ou enfants, qui ne font pas d'exercice, qui n'ont pas une bonne diète,

qui n'ont pas un poids santé. Travailler sur ces déterminants de base aurait également un gros impact sur le système de la santé, parce qu'en gardant ta population plus en santé, tu diminues la demande pour les services de santé et tu diminues également les coûts rattachés au système de santé.

Je sais que le projet de loi d'aujourd'hui parle de l'autre côté de l'équation. On vous parle d'avoir plus de professionnels de la santé, et comme je vous dis depuis le début, c'est quelque chose que l'on va appuyer. Mais c'est important de garder en tête qu'il y a l'autre côté de l'équation également : il y a la demande. Si on est capable de diminuer la demande pour des services de santé, pas en créant de grandes listes d'attentes pour que les gens se découragent, mais en gardant notre population en santé en travaillant sur les déterminants de la santé, eh bien, là on va diminuer la demande, et la balance dans le système de santé dans un tout sera là. Mais à la fin de la journée, les gens préfèrent de beaucoup demeurer en santé que d'être malades.

In fact, eight in 10 Canadians have at least one risk factor for stroke or heart disease. Diabetes and asthma are also on the rise. Eighty per cent of Canadians over the age of 65 have at least one chronic condition, one chronic disease that needs to be managed, and everybody knows that your primary care physicians have a very important role to play in managing chronic disease. This bill will certainly facilitate having more physicians in Ontario and it will make it easier for Ontarians, without access to primary care and physicians, to have access and help manage those chronic conditions. But remember, those chronic conditions will be way better managed following best practices if physicians work as part of an interdisciplinary team.

We also have to realize that disease is distributed unequally, with low-income and aboriginal people bearing the brunt of poor health, not to mention that they're also poor Ontarians.

The 2007 Conference Board of Canada report ranked Ontario's health care system fifth in 10 provinces. We are in the middle of the pack. I would certainly want, for all of the people of Ontario, for us to do better, for us to pass the middle of the pack. The middle of the pack is not good enough for me, especially when the same report ranks Canada's system as a whole as 11th out of 24 industrial countries. In sum, our health care system is not doing as good as it could; it's not doing as good as it should.

This bill is a step ahead. It will improve access to physicians, it will improve the number of physicians who work in Ontario, but it is a very small step. We can and should work on increasing the supply of physicians, but let's not pretend that this will solve the problem of lack of access to health care or radically improve the quality of care or ensure the financial stability and sustainability of our health care system. It won't. Much more needs to be done for this, and this is what I have tried to explain this morning.

Cela va nous faire plaisir du côté des néo-démocrates d'appuyer ce projet de loi. Ce projet de loi va nous

donner l'opportunité d'augmenter le nombre de médecins qui ont le droit de pratiquer en Ontario. Il va augmenter le nombre de médecins auxquels les Ontariens et Ontariennes ont accès. Mais il ne faut pas se leurrer; il ne faut pas se faire à croire que cela va régler tous les problèmes d'accès à notre système de santé.

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Il ne faut pas se faire à croire non plus que cela va augmenter la qualité des soins offerts en Ontario ou que cela, par elle-même, va assurer que notre système est financièrement assuré. Rien de ça. Il y a beaucoup d'autres choses qui doivent être mises en place pour que ça se passe, et c'est un peu ce dont j'ai essayé de vous parler aujourd'hui.

Steven Lewis, pas celui qui travaille en Afrique mais celui qui a travaillé pour le rapport Romanow, nous a dit que l'Ontario avait mis trop d'accent sur avoir plus de choses. Dépenser 55 % de plus pendant les sept dernières années au ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée, avoir deux fois plus de nouveaux gradués en médecine en 2007 qu'on n'en avait en 1997, avoir 20 % de plus d'imageries par résonance magnétique en 2008 qu'on n'en avait il y a deux ans, cela ne fait que de petits changements. Cela a diminué un tout petit peu les listes d'attente, cela a augmenté un tout petit peu la qualité des soins, et cela a augmenté seulement un tout petit peu les résultats.

En fait, on a ajouté toutes ces choses-là et on s'est rendu compte qu'il y avait certaines listes d'attente qui avaient descendu. Qu'on parle de chirurgies pour le cancer, les genoux, les hanches, ou des scans, on a eu un petit impact. Mais si on regarde les chirurgies cardiaques, les « bypass », l'imagerie par résonance magnétique ou les temps d'attente dans les salles d'urgence, cela n'a rien changé du tout, et dans certains cas, cela a vraiment rendu ça pire.

I see that time is running out; my colleague was nice enough to remind me.

Certainly, Bill 97, An Act to increase access to qualified health professionals for all Ontarians by amending the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991, although it is a light little bill, just the one page, will have an impact, and I want to assure you that our party, the NDP, will be supporting this act.

Le projet de loi 97, Loi visant à accroître l'accès des Ontariennes et des Ontariens aux professionnels de la santé qualifiés, va avoir l'appui des néo-démocrates.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

I wish to acknowledge the presence in the House today of Dr. Bob Frankford, who served as a member of the Legislature from 1990 to 1995, representing Scarborough East in the 35th Parliament.

Questions and comments? The member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to congratulate the member for Nickel Belt and thank her for her comments on Bill 97. I also want to thank our member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Laurel Broten, for the work that she did in the

leadup in setting a lot of the groundwork for Bill 97 that is before us today.

I do want to mention, though, the member for Nickel Belt made a couple of comments, talking about community health centres—I would expect that if the former Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, George Smitherman, were here, he'd have something he'd love to say on community health centres; there has been quite a large expansion in the community health centre system since we've come into power in 2003, and the minister obviously had a lot to do with that—as well as the comments on the scope of practice.

As she may be aware, the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council is touring the province and has been for some time, and their core focus, at least part of their focus, is the extension and the expansion of the scope of practice, especially around nurse practitioners. As the member may also be aware, when it comes to nurse practitioners and all the work that they can do around primary care, we have made a commitment to 25 nurse-practitioner-led clinics in Ontario, one of which I think is already established in either Sudbury or—in fact, two, I think are already established, one in Sudbury, very close to where the member comes from, and another one in Sault Ste. Marie, and soon, I hope, at least one in Thunder Bay.

Where I come from in northern Ontario, my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan, the issue around health professionals and their recruitment has been a long-standing, chronic problem. During my time on municipal council, I sponsored two resolutions that led to the use of residential property tax-based money to create positions to aid in the recruitment and retention of health care professionals. I should say that those have been quite positive and had a good impact on the quantum of health care professionals that we have in the community.

There are other things that we have done, obviously, as a government, such as family health teams, which the member from Nickel Belt did not reference. Family health teams, as we all know—three in my riding—being multidisciplinary, do a great job of helping people access primary care. Of course, what was forgotten to be mentioned was the fact that the NDP cut medical school spaces—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim Wilson: As a former Minister of Health, I just want to say to the House that this is one of the strangest one-page bills I have ever seen in the health care field. I guess because George Smitherman bullied the 23 professional colleges so badly during his time as Minister of Health, he's had to, as one of his last strokes in office, introduce this bill, Bill 97, to—I don't know exactly what it does; it's kind of strange—put the onus now on the 23 regulated health professional colleges to solve the doctor shortage and the qualified skilled and competent regulated health professionals shortages that we have in this province.

It's strange because it says it's compelling the colleges—with no penalties if they don't actually co-

operate with the ministry. I guess it's one of his bold, in-your-face statements saying, "Although the bill doesn't really do anything, now, through legislation and not just through talking to you, I'm going to compel you to work with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to make sure there's an adequate number of qualified physicians, nurses, and what have you in the province."

Again, it is a totally unnecessary piece of legislation, a piece of fluff. It's an embarrassment that it would be brought to this Parliament and that we'd be asked to vote upon it. If it wasn't because he was so mean to them, we wouldn't need this legislation. Co-operation always existed over the years. I was here as an opposition critic when the NDP regulated the 23 health professions, and they did a very good job. Ruth Grier did a very, very good job of introducing that legislation. I was her critic at the time, and I didn't have a lot of critical things to say because she did a very good job of it. They were happy. They were self-regulated. They were handling their complaints fairly well, and they were co-operating in those days with the ministry, and they always were a product and a child of the government. So you don't need this legislation to throw in their faces.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: First of all, I would just like to start off by thanking my colleague for a wonderful presentation. We in the NDP believe this is a good start. There is a lot more work to do in the medical area.

Speaking for myself, from the city of Hamilton, we are a leading community in health care and cutting-edge technology. A lot of money has been sunk into the Hamilton Health Sciences in the last two years, which I'm very pleased about. I would like to see more, of course. We're going to be a world leader in diabetes study. We also are now the centre for Canada for cancer research. We're very proud of our tradition in the medical area, and we hope that the government continues to pour money into the Hamilton area for the betterment of all Canadians and Ontarians in the medical area.

Just on a personal note, I would like to say that I'm doing my little bit to add to the medical situation. My daughter is now doing the RN, and she's going to be a practitioner, hopefully in two years if she continues in the pattern. That's my youngest. We're doing our little bit in Stoney Creek to add to the medical influx.

I would also like to say that there are many Ontarians who don't have doctors, and hopefully opening it up to foreign-trained doctors will increase the coverage for people who are lacking medical care. Obviously a lot of countries are in a desperate need of doctors, but if we can help ourselves at home first and move on to help other countries, that would be excellent. Hopefully, we can train enough doctors to send them overseas as well, to help other countries.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore.

M^{me} Laurel C. Broten: J'aimerais premièrement remercier le membre de Nickel Belt et le caucus néo-démocratique pour leur appui du projet de loi 97. C'est certain que c'est une partie de notre plan pour faire certain que les Ontariens et les Ontariennes vont avoir les services de santé dont ils ont besoin. Ça fait partie d'un plan où on a ouvert 150 équipes de santé familiales et 49 centres de santé communautaires. On a un nouveau contrat «tentatif» avec l'AMO pour faire certain que ceux qui veulent avoir un docteur peuvent avoir le soin d'un docteur.

J'aimerais demander et encourager ceux dans la législature de regarder les efforts qu'on a faits avec HealthForceOntario.

I want to take just a minute to encourage those in this Legislature to take a look at the work being done at HealthForceOntario—the access centre, the centre for evaluation of health professional credentials—and examine the context of that work being done there to recruit doctors into Ontario. And I want to highlight that we do have in HealthForceOntario an ethical recruitment strategy. It is one that really looks, first and foremost, to getting Ontarians and Canadians to come back home, and that's why the steps taken by the College of Physicians and Surgeons, through the work that we have done with them over the summer—to make sure that by December 1, Ontarians and those who practise in other Canadian jurisdictions and in the US can come to Ontario and practise without further testing and further accreditation. It's an important first step. It's part of our comprehensive plan, as is Bill 97, and I thank the NDP for their support of this endeavour.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. The member for Nickel Belt has two minutes to reply, if she chooses.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to start by answering some of the comments from the honourable member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan. Yes, we are very proud in Sudbury to be the home of the first nurse-practitioner-led clinic. These women worked extremely hard to be recognized and to have this clinic established. It is a tremendous success. People love them. They have a thriving client group, and I must say that members in my family go to this clinic and are absolutely thrilled.

They have, from the beginning, set up a strategy for this clinic to be interdisciplinary, with not only physicians and nurse practitioners, but to also have other members of the team work with them, and I look forward to the day when those nurse practitioner clinics will be available to more people in Ontario. I understand that in northern Ontario we will be the lucky ones on this front, because they seem to be making steps forward in northern Ontario a little bit more easily. I was not aware that they had one open in Sault Ste. Marie, but I think it is on the verge of being opened, and there's another one in the works for Thunder Bay. They're wonderful.

I would like to thank the honourable member from Simcoe—Grey and recognize that, yes, it was the NDP who put in the different self-regulated colleges. It has

served the people of Ontario very well and continues to have an important role to play, and certainly this bill will give them the opportunity to be even more important to the people of Ontario. And I would like to thank my colleague from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek and certainly the honourable member from Etobicoke—Lake-shore for her hard work on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Ottawa—Orléans.

M. Phil McNeely: Merci pour l'opportunité de parler sur le projet de loi 97, Loi visant à accroître l'accès des Ontariennes et des Ontariens aux professionnels de la santé qualifiés en modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées.

Le changement n'est pas grand et la loi n'est pas grande. On parle d'une page ici. Le changement est surtout l'obligation de l'ordre : « Il incombe à l'ordre de travailler en consultation avec le ministre pour veiller à ce que, dans l'intérêt public »—et qu'est-ce qui peut être plus fort?—« la population de l'Ontario ait accès à un nombre suffisant de membres d'une profession de la santé réglementée qui soient qualifiés et compétents. » Ça, c'est la loi dont on parle aujourd'hui.

We heard conflicting information on the availability of health care workers to deliver services to the public in Ontario. We all have heard from people in the delivery-of-health-care business, like, in my own case, Gérald Savoie of the Montfort Hospital, the CEO of our community hospital in Ottawa—Orléans. The aging baby boomers are requiring a lot more maintenance. I know that personally. The needs are increasing; the capacities to do things are increasing. A lot of doctors are reaching retirement age. As the member for Nickel Belt mentioned, new graduates are more than half women, and those women want to have families. Both men and women doctors want to have a life. The 60-, 70- and 80-hour weeks that my generation of doctors put in are no longer the norm—and that makes sense. This presents a new challenge in providing the services we need in Ontario.

Nurse practitioners are doing a great job in providing family health care in many areas, including remote areas. I was very pleased to hear that one family health team of nurse practitioners is already up and running, and I understand another will be getting organized in Thunder Bay. This is extremely important. When I was with the finance and economic affairs committee in northern Ontario, we had single nurse practitioners who were delivering health care in remote communities and were handling 80% to 85% of the medical needs in their communities. They were always well liked. They were always doing a great job in their community. This is great, to see other health care communities taking on the challenges—and the challenges are great in Ontario, across Canada and across North America.

Communities are very supportive of these new groups. The family health team, which takes a team approach to family health care, is working. I've had many discussions with Steve Pelletier from the Clarence-Rockland Family

Health Team. One doctor can now look after many more patients with the help of nurses, nurse practitioners and other health professionals. Working as a team makes sense in this business. Steve Pelletier, one of the doctors at the Rockland Family Health Team, told me that the fee-for-service, if the doctor had to see all the patients, was similar to taking a well-trained racehorse to a county fair and giving pony rides. Under the FHT, the right level of service is given by the right health care professional, and the well-trained—we have to say “well-trained”; they're in school and in training so much longer than other professionals—experienced doctor sees the patients that he has to see.

One thing that he does is, if you have hypertension, then you have to do your own testing of your blood pressure; if you have high sugar, you have to do testing of your sugar at home, and monitor your own. He puts people in charge of their own health care, and if they don't want to follow his rules and send their results in by e-mail, by phone or just drop them off to the hospital so that staff can fill out the charts—if they don't want to do that, he doesn't really want them as patients, and that again makes sense.

In order to meet the doctor needs of our communities and to provide the family health care in our communities, in order to keep as many patients as we can away from hospital emergencies, we need to maximize the use of each doctor and health professional. But in addition, we need to graduate more family doctors; we have to try to bring back as many of our Ontario-trained doctors who have left Ontario, and we have to do a much better job of including our internationally trained medical doctors in our health system.

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MPP Laurel Broten prepared a fine report, *Removing Barriers for International Medical Doctors*. That report includes several steps that can be taken in order that we make better use of these professionals who are already in our country, who are well-trained and who haven't been able to become certified as doctors.

This bill is extremely important, although it is very short. It's that aspect, that the onus has been put on the colleges, not only to be the gate to make sure that only qualified people become certified, not only to be the gatekeeper, but it's in the public interest that the people of Ontario have access to adequate numbers of qualified, skilled and competent regulated health professionals. It becomes their duty as well to work with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to make sure that as many qualified people as possible are recruited, who are in our communities now. I think that is a wonderful objective. It is in the public interest, making that part of their duties. This is going to change the way that the gatekeeper who protects us also will protect, by assisting in getting more health care professionals to work with us.

The Broten report had a five-point action plan. It was to fast-track, simplify and streamline the registration process for doctors practising in Canada and the US or any other country with a comparable health care system.

Number two was to help internationally trained doctors enter into medical practice in Ontario with the creation of a transitional licence and to practise under the supervision of a licensed practitioner. I believe that's the case with my with my own doctor on Bay Street here. He has a young medical graduate from Iran who is working with him. That's the process that has to be used and that's how we're going to bring more of these wonderful, well-trained doctors into our system. Number three was to undertake assessments more efficiently of each individual and allow the IMGs to move along the line of education and experience to certification more clearly. Fourth was to supply cultural bridging support, which would include cultural, language education, mentorship and training. And fifth was to develop coordinated individualized assistance for those seeking transfers to another sector of health care where it's more appropriate. I think that five-point action plan that was in the Broten report will give us the results we need, the results we want, the results that will help us provide more health professionals in Ontario.

I've spoken to Carl Nicholson of the Catholic Immigration Centre of Ottawa several times in the past about certification or accreditation of foreign-trained doctors. He has a program under Arber Zaplluzha, his project manager. They're working on a bridge program with the University of Ottawa, the Centretown Community Health Centre and the Sandy Hill Community Health Centre to help foreign-trained doctors move through the training and certification process. According to Arber Zaplluzha, there are 600 foreign-trained doctors on the list in Ottawa; that's just with their organization. He wasn't aware of this new bill but he felt that this certainly would be positive to what they're trying to do and he showed great interest in the bill; we sent him the information.

This shows that a program along the lines of the Broten report recommendations is essential to taking advantage of the human resources presently underutilized in our communities—underutilized, hurting our health care system, but underutilized, more importantly, for those individuals who have the training, who have the expertise, but who have to take other means of employment in this long wait they have to become members of the College of Physicians and Surgeons.

The first policy change by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, CPSO, will come into effect December 1, 2008, when doctors licensed to practise in other parts of Canada can practise in Ontario. Doctors who are licensed in the US can move to Ontario and practise medicine if they complete US postgraduate training and examinations. That's 5,000 to 6,000 doctors.

I have a friend in Wyoming, Dr. Cournoyer, and I was phoning him. He was chased out in the 1990s, when doctors didn't make sufficient dollars here, and he would like to come back to Ontario, so it's good to see that we're going to make that easier.

I think that my time is up. I really hope that this bill goes through. I'm glad to see the support from the New Democrats on it. It will facilitate bringing these wonderful doctors into our system.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to add some comments on the speech on Bill 97, which, as has been pointed out, is a one-page bill. As I was reading it, I was also going through my mail and noted I have a resolution from the town of Bracebridge, where they're looking for some action to do with the physician shortage in Ontario, and particularly with international medical graduates. I ask the government to explain what this one-page bill is really going to do. It's just switching the onus and responsibility onto the colleges; it's not really taking any significant action.

I would also like at this time, when I have the opportunity, to highlight another situation where the government has effectively shut down community lab services in Muskoka and east Parry Sound, although technically the decision was made by the hospital board. The decision was indeed made with a gun to their heads and should be properly blamed on the McGuinty government. If I can refer to that situation, there was a public meeting last night up in Huntsville and there's another public meeting Wednesday night in Bracebridge to do with community lab services. The local hospital board was told—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka how this relates back to the speech that was given just now by the member from Ottawa–Orléans.

Mr. Norm Miller: Well, we are talking, Mr. Speaker, about health and health-related issues, and I think the two are very much connected. You're cutting into my time, though, Mr. Speaker, so I don't know whether I will fully be able to explain the complicated shutdown of community lab services in the short time I have available.

All I would like to say is the hospital board has made a decision to shut down community lab services. However, they've done it with a gun at their heads, pointed by the McGuinty Liberal government, because they've been told that, sure, they can run community lab services, "But we're not funding it anymore, so you can do it but you don't get the \$1.65 million to fund those services. And by the way, balance your budget as well." So I say don't blame the hospital board; blame it—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: In response to the honourable member from Ottawa–Orléans, I would say that I would agree with lots of what he's just said. Physicians in Ontario should be allowed to have a balanced work life. He talked about—not that he's old or anything, but that in his time, physicians were expected to work 70 to 80 hours a week. This is not a healthy lifestyle. Physicians spend a lot of time talking to their clients about how to keep themselves healthy, and one of those important conversations physicians have with their clients is to balance their work and life so that there's time for both. Working 70 to 80 hours a week is not going to allow you to lead a healthy lifestyle, and our physicians in Ontario

should have the opportunity to practise in a way that allows them to have healthy lifestyles.

He then pointed to some of the very good community health centres in his riding, and I would agree with him. Community health centres have practice opportunities for physicians that allow them to do that—to work and focus on practising medicine, working within a team where the nurses provide nursing care, the social worker provides social work, the dieticians provide nutritional advice and the physicians practise medicine. But they also do this in a way that leaves them time to be with their families, to have a family and to have a life. Certainly it is a model that is available to physicians practising in Ontario and a model that has seen some growth under this government. Although I would say that putting into place the new satellites and community health centres is very slow, I still agree with what the honourable member from Ottawa—Orléans has said.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: It is my pleasure to rise today in support of Bill 97. This is an important piece of legislation that will remove many barriers that internationally trained doctors face before they can begin practising. By removing these barriers, we will increase the number of doctors practising in Ontario. This will help to reduce wait times, and Ontarians will receive care closer to home. This bill is proof of this government's commitment to recognizing the important role that internationally trained professionals play in Ontario.

In my inaugural speech, I spoke about this issue because I have personally experienced the many barriers that foreign-trained professionals face in this country. When I first arrived in Canada, despite having several university degrees and over 10 years of experience as a teacher, my qualifications were not recognized. By removing barriers for foreign-trained doctors, this government is showing that it recognizes the many contributions that internationally trained professionals make in helping Ontario become a stronger and more equitable province for all of us. At the same time, this bill is going to make key improvements in health care throughout the province. That is why I support this bill.

I would like to commend my colleague the member from Etobicoke—Lakeshore for the hard work she put into producing her report on this matter. I would also like to encourage all members of this House—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Five years ago, Dalton McGuinty, in his election when he became Premier, promised to recruit and train more doctors. Five years ago, the Premier also said that no person would go without the medical attention they needed. However, five years later we have almost a million people—the estimate is between 850,000 and 1.01 million Ontarians—still without a family doctor.

There seems to be an impression in this House that this bill somehow helps to bring in more international

medical graduates. IMGs aren't even mentioned in the bill. If I was the chair and registrar, for example, of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, I would simply say, "Here, government, I need \$50 million for a new program for this. Here's our plan. It may include IMGs; it may not. It may include pensions for doctors. It may include retention incentives for physicians," a number of things that John Tory and the PC caucus have urged, such as opening up more medical school spaces again. The last time that was done was under the Mike Harris-Ernie Eves government, when we opened up the first medical school in over 40 years in the province in northern Ontario, or started to build—

Interjection.

Mr. Jim Wilson: You took credit for it. I saw it in all your brochures, but you didn't have anything to do with the darned thing other than to cut the bloody ribbon.

This is a bill that is leaving a false impression with a number of people that it somehow has something to do with bringing in international medical graduates. I remind the people listening at home that it may or may not have anything to do with that. That depends on whether the colleges bring forward a plan. This bill contains no new funding; no talk about new funding in any of the speeches that I've heard.

Again, if I was registrar of one of the professional health-regulating colleges, I would do exactly what you say. You've gotten rid of your obligation to do anything about the problem of the shortage of doctors in the province and you're going to put it on the professional colleges. Fine, I'll do up a plan. It may cost you \$100 million for one college alone. You have no idea, or at least there's no proper discussion here in the House, about the cost. You're going to have to pay for this and you aren't going to get away with putting it off on the colleges.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. The member for Ottawa—Orléans has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I wish to thank the member for Parry Sound, and the member from Nickel Belt, who spoke very supportively of the bill and of the comments. I have to agree with her that doctors need lives as well, and health care professionals need lives as well, and we have to make sure that we acknowledge that.

I would like to thank the member from Mississauga—Brampton South, who has personal knowledge of the difficulties that foreign-trained doctors and foreign-trained professionals, health care professionals, have in becoming accredited in this province, and we need their services so badly.

Lastly, I would like to just disagree with the member from Simcoe—Grey for his comments. I think that if he would read Laurel Broten's report or talk to a lot of the groups like the Catholic immigration service in Ottawa, then he would find out a lot of different things. There are presently about 5,000 internationally trained doctors practising in Ontario, and about 630 internationally trained doctors are currently in residency training. We've

more than doubled the number of assessment and training spaces for internationally trained doctors, from 90 in 2003 to 235 in 2007 and 2008. Of course, because of what happened in the 1990s, and with the spaces for doctors and the tearing apart of the health system, it's taking time, but those doctors are coming on stream. Those spaces in the universities have been increased, and I am sure that if we put in place these five steps that come out of the Broten report, we will see a lot more foreign-trained doctors helping us in Ontario to live healthier lives. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm very pleased to join the debate for Bill 97. I wanted to first of all congratulate the new Minister of Health, Minister Caplan. I know that there's a little bit of excitement in his family because his mother once held the portfolio as well. So I hope he lives up to his own expectations of sort of replacing his mother down the line, but I think that's fabulous. It shows a nice tradition in his family.

I also wanted to congratulate the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore. I think that she worked very hard on a backgrounder to address some of the critical challenges that we face with respect to doctor shortages and international medical graduates.

Unfortunately, as our health critic, a former health minister—Elizabeth Witmer from Kitchener–Waterloo—pointed out yesterday, and I believe rightfully so, there is confusion in Bill 97. It's confusion. There is only one sentence in the bill. It simply says, "It is the duty of the college to work in consultation with the minister to ensure, as a matter of public interest, that the people of Ontario have access to adequate numbers of qualified, skilled and competent regulated health professionals."

I ask, where does the bill say anything about foreign-trained doctors or international medical graduates? The unfortunate thing, obviously, is that this bill became a product of spin, not substance.

Obviously, the piece of work provided by Ms. Broten of Etobicoke–Lakeshore—I have no idea why she's not in cabinet—was a very substantive piece. It was a very substantive policy piece, a backgrounder to address a critical issue that ridings across Ontario are facing. I'm going to tell you, in the fast-growing area of south Nepean, in my riding of Nepean–Carleton, we're dealing with not only a doctor shortage, but we're also dealing with the challenges faced by those who are trained as doctors across the various places around this world, yet who are not able to enter the medical field here in Canada. This bill is smoke and mirrors. It is not at all about improving access to, or for, foreign-trained doctors. My colleague from Simcoe–Grey adequately and appropriately points out that some people believe this will improve the chances for international medical graduates to work in Ontario. It does not. I think the Liberals were very successful early on, when the bill was introduced, in actually floating out Ms. Broten's backgrounder as a potential bill, yet we do only get this one line. It is

important to remember, as we continue to discuss Bill 97, that the bill does not mention international medical graduates once. As a result, I do not feel, nor does my caucus feel, that one international medical graduate will gain access to our health care system when this bill is passed.

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As my constituent Dr. Ali Zaidi told me yesterday, Bill 97 does not make a priority for IMGs residing in Canada. Of course, as my colleague Elizabeth Witmer pointed out yesterday, "This bill only says that it's going to force the 23 colleges in this province to take over the responsibility of addressing the shortage of health care professionals." So it's doing what this government does best. It is playing the blame game and it's going to continue to do it on the backs of health care professionals and patients in this province.

I know why they're shifting the blame. You know, Stéphane Dion's got his green shift and Dalton McGuinty's got his blame shift. But my colleagues and I know that five years ago it was this government that promised Ontarians no one would be without a family physician, yet five years later almost one million Ontarians are without a family physician. I hear from those people almost daily in my constituency. They stop me on the streets, they e-mail me, they contact my office. And I hear it time and again from new Canadians in South Nepean who are continually wondering when they're going to gain access to the medical field here and when the barriers are going to be reduced.

I often tell the story here in the chamber about visiting a local mosque in my riding of Barr Haven with the South Nepean Muslim community. I asked the question, just out of curiosity, "How many of you folks here, if you were able to work in Canada as a doctor and transfer your skills and your training from your home country, would be working?" There were about 50 people in the room, and six people put up their hands. Since that day, it's been a passion of mine to work with my community to try to address this issue. We were trying to arrange for a round table early on, but one of the key medical professionals we wanted to bring in through the Ottawa Hospital wasn't available at the time, so we postponed it. I don't know if it's a bad thing, because I think now, as we go into committee, I would like my folks in Nepean–Carleton to be part of this process.

I urge the government to make sure that when this goes to committee they actually travel to the national capital of this country, to the city of Ottawa, to make sure that the folks in Ottawa, Ottawa–Orléans and Ottawa West–Nepean, and the good people I represent in Nepean–Carleton, have an opportunity to address this piece of legislation.

We've got patients without doctors and we've also got doctors in this province without jobs. As someone who at one time did not have a family physician—in fact, that was one of the major reasons I decided to get into politics and run for nomination, because I didn't have a family physician—I really think that we need to address this

doctor shortage. My colleague pointed out yesterday that many people were excited. They were excited when this piece of legislation came out because they thought it was going to be based on Ms. Broten's piece of work, where there was actually going to be some real, meaningful teeth in the legislation. But instead we receive one line—one line that instead blames the colleges for the doctor shortages in this province.

As Dr. Lisa Yip writes to Elizabeth Witmer, "I was excited to hear the announcement in June that the province would be introducing changes to reduce barriers for foreign-trained physicians to practise in Ontario.... Thus, it was to my great disappointment that ... I was informed that there were no actual changes in place."

I share Dr. Yip's disappointment. Despite all the good intentions of the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore, her hard work is not reflected in this piece of legislation. It is not reflected in this bill. It does not pass the standard. My residents will not see a family physician as a result of this, and certainly my constituents in Nepean–Carleton who are international medical graduates will not see the barriers that they face every day reduced. Simply put, all Bill 97 will do is shift the blame from a government that promised to end the doctor shortage five years ago but has not yet met its commitment.

I would like to read into the record an e-mail from my constituent Mukarram Ali Zaidi. He said: "We need an immediate strategy for international medical graduates by increasing residency positions for IMGs, giving preference to IMGs living in Canada over IMGs residing in other countries. Give fair and transparent residency matching process..."—he continues, and he's been a real strong and effective advocate, yet Mr. McGuinty has done nothing to address the doctor shortage in this province. The Conservative Party will continue to stand for those who are foreign-trained doctors. We will continue to stand for the people without doctors in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I see that you would like me to wrap up.
Applause.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: This is the first time I've had applause by the Liberals this session.

But, Mr. Speaker, just for clarity, I do have 11 minutes on the clock, so how do we deal with this?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the honourable member, and the time that has been allocated to her, the next time this is to be debated, the floor will be hers.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming this group of legislative pages serving in the first session of the 39th Parliament. I would ask the pages to please assemble for the introductions.

Tamika Bernhard-Lumley, Don Valley West; Maylee Bossy, Chatham–Kent–Essex; Connor Chan, Pickering–

Scarborough East; Lauren Chan, St. Paul's; Asha Collins, Toronto–Danforth; Jasmine Douglas, Oshawa; Timothy Fuke, Etobicoke–Lakeshore; Justin Gracie, Haldimand–Norfolk; Kritika Gunachelvan, Mississauga East–Cooksville; Sarah Holman, Eglinton–Lawrence; Michael Hyer, Thunder Bay–Superior North; Imaan Javeed, Scarborough–Guildwood; Scarlett Michael, Burlington; Karlie Potts, Niagara West–Glanbrook; Michael Ralphs, Simcoe–Grey; Marissa Scott, Huron–Bruce; Supriya Sethi, Brampton West; Matthew Smith–Main, Oakville; Paige Weller, Timiskaming–Cochrane; and Elizabeth Williams, Scarborough Southwest.

Welcome, pages. I hope you enjoy your session. Please resume your positions.

Applause.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Yesterday, in accordance with the standing order that gives me the discretion to do so, I recognized the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, Mr. Murdoch, an independent member, to place a question during oral questions. I want to clarify how I was guided in recognizing the member for an oral question, the placement of the question and the subsequent rotation of question period.

Standing order 37(i) states: "The Speaker has the discretion to permit an independent member to place an oral question and one supplementary question during oral question period. In exercising his or her discretion, the Speaker shall have regard to the opportunities that members of recognized parties, other than the leaders of opposition parties or members who place questions instead of the leaders, have to place such questions. An independent member shall notify the Speaker of his or her intention to place a question."

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I did receive notice from the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound of his desire to place a question and decided to allow his question yesterday. I will now be mindful of the relative opportunities other members have to place questions in question period before allowing the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound to place another question, should he advise me of his desire to do so.

I believe the cited standing order charges the Speaker with finding the right balance so that no private member, whether affiliated with a recognized party or not, is disadvantaged in his or her ability to represent constituents or hold the government to account in question period.

With respect to my recognition of a government member to place the next question following the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, I was guided by a very few previous examples we have of an independent member placing a question during oral questions, since the adoption in 1997 of the standing order I quoted above. On those occasions, the Speaker recognized an independent member for a question late in question period, inserting the question in the next existing rotation, following which he resumed the question period rotation that would

otherwise have occurred. Using these precedents, I permitted a question by the independent member yesterday very close to the end of question period, following a question by the third party. I then moved from the independent member back to the regular rotation, that being a question from a government member. Thus, questions by independent members in addition to the existing rotation are to be inserted at a time and frequency considered appropriate at the discretion of the Speaker.

This method of proceeding will be consistent with previous occasions when the House has had a single independent member, and this is different than when, in the recent past, the members of the third party were all independent members. During that period, the House resolved the issue of their participation in question period initially through a unanimous consent and subsequently through the adoption of a recommendation to the Speaker that guided the Speaker on an ongoing basis.

I want to thank the leader of the official opposition, whose prompting at the end of yesterday's question period gave rise to this opportunity to address the House in this manner.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Yesterday, I asked the Premier a question; I have a question for him again today. Yesterday, not surprisingly, he declined to answer. It dealt with his government's failure to recognize the urgency for a provincial response to our deteriorating economy.

Unlike the government, the official opposition sought the advice of independent non-partisan experts, and the result of that consultation was a six-point action plan that you can implement with the full co-operation of the official opposition.

Premier, once again, will you commit to immediately bring in an economic update that will provide relief to struggling families and businesses and jump-start our economy?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: As the honourable member well knows, there will be an opportunity for the Minister of Finance to bring forward an economic update as such. But to be clear today, as I was yesterday, no, we cannot and will not adopt the Conservative approach to dealing with our economic challenge, which is to reduce our revenues by \$5 billion. We are not prepared to do that. That will mean cuts to our schools, it will mean cuts to our health care, cuts to our ability to protect public safety. We are not prepared to do that.

You'll notice as well that the NDP are offering that the best way for us to deal with this economic challenge is to look to find a way to spend our way out of this. We're going to continue to take our cue from Ontario families. They think that we've got to be very careful; they think

we've got to be prudent. We've got to act responsibly; we've got to stay focused on our priorities. We will continue to do that. Health care, education, protection of the environment, public safety: Those are the kinds of things we remain focused on.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: To the fewer and fewer Ontarians who get to watch question period, that response has to be disappointing, if not disheartening. The Progressive Conservative caucus is offering its full support and co-operation. This is not a Conservative approach; these are recommendations provided by independent, non-partisan economic experts, one of them a key adviser to the government, and the Premier chooses to continue playing political games.

Families in Ontario are hurting. They're worried about their futures; they're concerned about what the future holds for their kids and grandkids. Premier, why won't you work with us in a non-partisan way, with the advice of independent experts, to turn this province's economy around?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the sentiment that informs that offer. I'd like to reciprocate, Speaker. There's something that we can all do as Ontarians. Number one, we need to understand that we're generating lots of wealth today in the province of Ontario—lots of it. A big problem has to do with the fact that we send \$20 billion annually to Ottawa for distribution to the rest of the country. If we could keep a bit more of that tremendous wealth that we continue to generate annually, then we could invest, possibly, in the kinds of proposals being put forward by my honourable colleague opposite. If we need to come together on one thing, we need to say to Ottawa, "Let us keep a bit more of our own money."

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: That's a tired refrain or, should I say, whine. Our economic growth has stalled so badly, we're on the brink of recession. Our job losses are so high that unemployment is above the national average. How much more evidence does the Premier need that his plan is not working? Do we have to wait for breadlines and people saying, "Brother, can you spare me a dime?"

They keep making one-off announcements like the cabinet shuffle, but where's the plan for today? What are the steps to stop jobs from disappearing? The roof is leaking and all this government does is put out more buckets. They have to get up there, fix the roof, and that means tackling the real fundamental problems. It means coming up with a new plan, and it means acting now because people are losing confidence and hope. We're ready to work with you. Why won't you take us up on that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm delighted to work with my colleague opposite, but I want him to understand something that Ontarians are coming to understand. We are generating lots of wealth in the province of Ontario, so much so that we're sending \$20 billion annually to

Ottawa for distribution in the rest of the country. What I'm saying to my colleague opposite is, he needs to find a way to come to grips with that. He needs to find a way to come to understand that we need to stand together on this kind of an issue. He needs to join not just our government but the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and so many other organizations who are saying to Ottawa, "All right, we've had enough. We want to keep a bit more of our own wealth. We're generating lots of it. Let's keep it. Let's invest it in the kinds of things—further tax cuts, further investments in innovation, infrastructure and the like."

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question is to the new Minister of Labour. Welcome, Minister, to your new duties. A survey of the members of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business reveals that small business owners are sick and tired of being harassed by heavy-handed labour inspectors. These inspectors are more interested in loading up the government coffers with fines and penalties than in trying to work with small business to assist them in workplace safety. Minister, when are you going to stop strong-arming small businesses who are already struggling to stay afloat?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I want to thank the member opposite for the question. I look forward to working with that member on this issue and many matters that concern all Ontario workers. The main thing we're focused on is the health and safety of our workers. We are going to continue to reduce workplace injuries. Yes, we invested in more inspectors. Those inspectors are doing a marvelous job. It's making us more productive here in Ontario. It's making sure that our businesses are healthy places, safe places, productive places to work. I hope the member comes on board and works on behalf of all Ontario workers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Robert Bailey: An example: First, Cash Rolls of Canada of Guelph, Ontario, was the sole manufacturer in Canada of money-handling products. Last June, without notice, labour inspectors from your department unplugged the company's machinery. Stephanie Watt, the company's owner, was told by those inspectors that she couldn't operate her business until she made upgrades to this machinery. She had a good record with the WSIB, yet Ms. Watt was given no time to comply, nor had she even been made aware that there were new regulations she had to comply with.

Minister, can you explain to this House why your inspectors took such a high-handed approach with this small business owner?

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Hon. Peter Fonseca: I thank the member for bringing this to my attention, and I will bring it to my ministry staff to get more information. As I said earlier, our main focus here is the health and safety of our workers. We have had a wonderful track record. Over the last four

years, we have seen a reduction in workplace injuries of 20%. This is great, of course, for our workforce, but it also is great for our companies. It is a saving for our companies by reducing workplace injury. It makes us that much more competitive. We're going to continue that good work, but I do take the member's question under advisement and I will consult with ministry staff on this particular case.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Well, Minister, I'm sure they're going to be safe because when people are sitting at home on the couch and not working, they can't get hurt.

Minister, just to point out to you and your government that Ms. Watt is with us today; she is in the gallery. She certainly came here today looking for answers, and she clearly got none. Ms. Watt shut down her manufacturing business, not because of a high dollar or global competition. She shut down her manufacturing business solely because of your ministry's callous attitude towards small business. As a result, she has moved that business and those jobs to the United States. Now 11 people in Guelph are without a job and the Ontario economy is without the \$1 million a year that her business injected into it. Your ministry did not try to work with her and other small business owners. What is your ministry going to do instead of showing these people the door? When are you finally going to work with business owners, our job creators, instead of against them?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Labour?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: As I said to the member opposite, I will bring it to the attention of the ministry. I'm willing to work with the member. We are focused on the health and safety of our workers. We will make sure that those workers, when they go to work in the morning, come back home safe and healthy.

Now, when it comes to creating jobs, we have a five-point plan here. And I can tell you that at the heart of that five-point plan is our investments in our people, in our workforce. We are going to continue with that plan. When it comes to working with our employers and employees, we also have a plan, and that one is, first, around education; second, yes, around enforcement; and third, to incent good behaviour. We are going to continue to do that here in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Leader of the third party.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Premier. I think the Premier would admit that this has been a very devastating summer, especially for Ontario workers: jobs to the tune of 40,000 manufacturing jobs disappearing in one month; announcements that, for example, Oshawa is going to shut down the General Motors truck plant; announcements from other auto parts producers that they in turn are laying off not hundreds, but several hundreds and thousands of workers.

I think most Ontarians wanted to believe that the McGuinty government would come forward with some strategy to help sustain good jobs in this province. Can you tell people, Premier, why the McGuinty government doesn't have a jobs strategy and doesn't have any plan to sustain manufacturing jobs in this province at a time when people are very worried about losing their livelihoods?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I would be delighted to share with my honourable colleague some of our plans. We have a five-point plan to strengthen this economy. One of the things that we are doing in that regard is we are cutting business taxes; in fact, we are cutting them to the tune of \$3 billion over the course of four years. It's expensive, but it's affordable because we are doing it in that particular way. We have eliminated capital taxes for our manufacturers. In fact, one of the things that I did during the course of the summer was I visited a business—Honeywell—and provided them with a \$764,000 cheque by way of a capital tax refund. We are also investing heavily, as my friend knows, in infrastructure. At the beginning of the summer I met with the AMO folks and announced a \$1.1-billion investment in municipal infrastructure. Those are some of the things that we are doing to create jobs in the immediate term.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: Maybe the Premier doesn't realize it, but this is all old news. This is what the McGuinty government has been talking about for over a year now and, as it happens, thousands of workers are being shown the door. Obviously this is not working. You referred to reducing the capital tax. Yes, banks will love it when you reduce the capital tax, insurance companies will love it when you reduce the capital tax, but manufacturers are bleeding jobs by 10,000 at a time.

I ask again, where is the McGuinty government's plan to take on a loss of jobs in this province, a loss of jobs that is growing worse by the week? Don't recite old news. What's your plan to deal with the massive loss of jobs in this province today?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I don't understand how \$1.1 billion for our municipal partners just a month ago is particularly old news. As my friend understands, it takes a while for municipalities to get that money out the door, to get those projects under way, to get those shovels in the ground and to get people employed.

He will also know that we are investing heavily in the skills and education of our workers. We have the biggest job retraining program of its kind in Canada. We're inviting 20,000 Ontarians who have lost their jobs to participate in this program. We'll provide them with up to two years of training, with up to \$28,000 by way of expenses that we will cover to help them get back on their feet and develop the kinds of skills that are in demand at present. Those things can't be done overnight. My friend may dismiss them, but we believe they are absolutely essential, they are thoughtful, they are prudent, they're responsible and they will be effective.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: The Premier talks about a so-called job training strategy which will not even cover 10% of the people who have lost their jobs in the last three years. Imagine if you went somewhere and a community had been laid low by devastation and you said, "Well, we're prepared to help maybe one in 10." That is the problem here. As literally tens of thousands of hard-working families are losing their jobs, losing their livelihoods, losing their homes and watching their communities crumble, the McGuinty government's response is, "Well, maybe we might be able to help one in 10, perhaps." People want a job strategy. They see that other manufacturing provinces like Manitoba are actually gaining manufacturing jobs as Ontario loses. Where is the McGuinty government's jobs strategy? What you've done so far—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I know that my colleague has been eager to put forward information coming from Manitoba. One thing I know for certain is that Manitoba has lost almost 10% of its manufacturing jobs since January. I know it's in my colleague's interest to portray a fiction which somehow means that the only jurisdiction in North America that's being challenged at present is here in Ontario, but Ontarians don't believe that to be true. What they do want to know is that we're working as hard as we can with them. So we're continuing to cut our taxes, we are continuing to invest heavily in innovation, skills opportunities, partnerships with businesses and in infrastructure. Those are the kinds of things that we will continue to do because we know—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier. New question, leader of the third party.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton: Again to the Premier: The Premier may want to quibble around the edges, but the fact of the matter is that other manufacturing provinces in this country are doing far better than Ontario. Their economies continue to grow. They continue to do well in things like transportation manufacturing, they continue to do well in things like forest products manufacturing, while Ontario loses and the McGuinty government doesn't seem to have a plan.

I ask the question again. Most of what you talk about here today are things that you announced two and three years ago. Meanwhile, tens of thousands of hard-working Ontarians continue to lose their jobs. What is the McGuinty government's strategy? Sending a minister of international junkets on more international junkets obviously isn't the answer. What is the McGuinty government's plan to sustain—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, the leader of the NDP knows what our strategy is; he just doesn't like it. I accept that. His strategy would be for us to spend billions

and billions of dollars. The Conservative strategy is for us to cut billions and billions of dollars away from our revenue stream to hurt our hospitals and our schools. We find ourselves in a prudent and different position. It's prudent, it's responsible, it's thoughtful, and it's in keeping with Ontario's values. We are both cutting taxes and investing in infrastructure. We are both investing in the skills and educational opportunities for Ontarians and investing in innovation. Furthermore, we're prepared to enter into partnerships with businesses to help them grow, those in particular that are prepared to reach even further and to make themselves stronger. We do have a strategy. The truth is they don't like the strategy, and I'm not prepared to spend billions and billions of dollars, as they are suggesting.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: No one is talking about spending billions of dollars. Implementing a refundable manufacturing investment tax credit has cost very little in Quebec and Manitoba, and has helped all kinds of companies sustain themselves through what we admit is going to be a tough recession. Similarly, implementing a meaningful "Buy in Ontario" strategy would cost next to nothing but would make a huge difference in terms of sustaining and creating new manufacturing jobs in the transportation sector. The Premier talks about spending hundreds of millions of dollars. You know, Premier, I saw you write a close to \$300-million cheque to General Motors and I saw thousands of workers go out the door.

Your strategy obviously isn't working. When are we going to see a practical strategy that's going to sustain jobs, rather than result in the loss of more jobs?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I guess the leader of the NDP is saying that we should not be looking for ways to partner with the auto sector. We happen to be the single largest producer of vehicles in North America. He's saying that we should just cede that position, cede that advantage, forget the auto sector. I guess it's all over. But what about the tens of thousands of people who are working in that, directly and indirectly? We bring a different perspective on this. We're prepared to work with the CAW, we're prepared to work with auto manufacturers—not only the original Detroit three, but all the new ones. We're proud of the fact that we've landed a new greenfield assembly plant here in Ontario from Toyota. We're looking forward to having the thousands of people taken up in jobs through that particular industry. And we're going to continue to find ways to work with the private sector and with labour to build a stronger economy here in the province of Ontario. But we're not prepared, as my friend obviously is, to dismiss the end of the auto sector here in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Howard Hampton: No one is talking about the end of the auto sector. What we're talking about is the government that writes cheques for hundreds of millions of dollars and doesn't get any job guarantees. That

clearly is not a very good strategy for sustaining jobs. So I ask again, as the jobs crisis worsens, as more and more working people are losing their jobs, as more and more communities are pushed closer to the edge, where is the McGuinty government's response? Reciting old speeches, reannouncing old announcements, obviously isn't doing a thing. Where is the strategy to sustain and create new jobs in Ontario before the loss of manufacturing jobs becomes worse, as it evidently is every day?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: From time to time, a few facts, I find, are always helpful. There are almost 450,000 more jobs today than there were in 2003. One third of all new jobs created in Canada were created here in one province, the province of Ontario. Our unemployment rate today is 6.3%. When we first formed the government, inheriting an economy from the Conservatives, the unemployment rate then was 7%. According to Stats Canada, there are 51,900 more new Ontario jobs than in December 2007. And 60% of all new jobs created in Canada since January of this year were created here in Ontario—one province out of 10. So while it's true that we have some real challenges, I think it's important to keep some perspective on this. The fact of the matter is that Ontario continues to grow, we continue to generate 40% of all the national wealth, and we continue to send \$20 billion to Ottawa for distribution to other provinces.

YOUTH CRIME

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Attorney General. There have been an unprecedented number of shootings in Toronto in the last two weeks, many of them apparently gang-related and involving young offenders. Attorney General, people in Toronto are afraid, but even more than that, they're outraged that this kind of lawlessness is happening in our streets. The Prime Minister has proposed new legislation to replace the existing young offenders law that, among other things, will include stiffer penalties for those 14 years of age and older who are convicted of violent and serious crime. It will allow for the release of their names in order to protect the public. Attorney General, why have you rejected these deterrence proposals out of hand, and why won't you support this legislation to protect our communities?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Of course, it would have been nice if we had the support of the party opposite for the ban on handguns to reduce the risk to people. It would have been nice if we had the support of the party opposite so the Harper government would fulfill its promise to put 2,500 more police officers across Canada, but they only delivered 40% for five years. We've moved for mandatory minimums on handgun crimes, reverse-onus bail and a guns-and-gangs task force that's a leader in North America.

I have told the Harper government that the youth offender changes they introduced were not tough enough on the youth that pose the greatest risk. They didn't follow the recommendations of the Nunn commission in Nova Scotia. They had it backwards.

Come forward with a meaningful plan that will protect all the people in our community, and then we will be on side; that's what I say.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I would say to the Attorney General that we virtually have a handgun ban in Canada as it is, and the public isn't buying this story. You've got to come up with something better. This is very serious. We've got youth dying in our streets. We need to have a balanced answer. Clearly, we're missing the deterrence factor, which you're rejecting, which is causing youth to die in our streets. The deterrence factor is clearly missing, Attorney General, when you have older gang members getting young ones to do their dirty work and to pull the trigger because they know there won't be any consequences of any significance. Why won't you work with the federal government to come up with a meaningful answer to the youth crime and the violent crime we're facing right now?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Well, in fact, just like the Harper government on the amendments that it introduced to the youth legislation, the honourable member has it backwards. When they introduced the legislation, we specifically said that deterrence and denunciation for the most serious offences has to be there. I went to see the Minister of Justice. He invited all justice ministers to come and talk to him about his legislation, and the almost unanimous view is that he had it backwards, that his provisions weren't tough enough on the youth who posed the greatest risk. You weren't there, with respect, and you don't know. They all told him to change it. He had six months, but he didn't change it. They have it backwards; they're placing people at risk in our communities, and unless and until they get it right—when he came to Toronto, he heard from the chief of police and dozens of community groups. They just got it backwards: not tough enough on the serious, no support—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

PROPANE EXPLOSION

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is to the Premier. Today we learned that almost half of Ontario's 196 large propane storage facilities did not comply with provincial safety regulations. Seven of them posed immediate hazards. The massive explosion at Sunrise Propane in Downsview demonstrates just what can happen when these facilities are not properly regulated and inspected.

It was only a few years ago that members who now sit as part of the McGuinty government were very critical of the self-regulation, self-inspection model that is at the heart of the Technical Standards and Safety Authority system. Can the Premier tell us why, when members of the McGuinty government were so critical of this self-regulation, self-inspection model, nothing has been done by the McGuinty government to fix it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services.

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Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me start by saying that what happened at Sunrise is of great concern to our government. This has affected the lives of the people who live in that community. That is exactly why we took very serious action right away as soon as this incident happened. On August 19, I ordered a complete review of all the sites that were similar to the Sunrise Propane site. Out of that, yes, recommendations came that of the seven sites, six were basically to do with the certificates not being there, but the people were properly trained. There was one facility that was serious, and we are going to take all the actions that are absolutely necessary to protect the safety of all the residents in this province. We are absolutely committed to doing everything that will—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Howard Hampton: What's clear from the Sunrise Propane experience is that people in this province were not being protected. What's clear is that this model of self-inspection, self-regulation by industry literally puts the fox in the henhouse. Members of the McGuinty government, the now-Minister of Transportation—I don't think I could have said it better—said, "We're having this government place the fox in charge of the henhouse; that is, those who have a close connection to what is being supervised, and perhaps have a vested interest, are those who are now doing the supervising."

I want to ask again; you were very critical of this. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people could have been killed in the Sunrise Propane explosion. What is your justification for continuing to allow this system of self-regulation, self-inspection by industry when it has proven to be so bad and so ineffective in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me just lay out for the leader of the third party what some of the things are that we are doing.

First off, I have asked two experts to really look at what needs to be done in this case, how we should do the inspections, what kind of inspections should happen, and what should be included in those inspections. We have asked the experts to do it. We are not even sure, at this point in time, what has been the cause at Sunrise Propane, so we need to get to the bottom of that.

But I want to assure the Ontario public that we are absolutely committed to doing whatever needs to be done to make sure that the Ontario public is safe. We will take all the actions that are necessary in order to do that.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: My question is for the Minister of Education. As a lifelong educator, a teacher and vice-principal of over 20 years, I feel compelled to seek further clarification regarding comments that were made yesterday by a member of the opposition.

Yesterday, the member from Burlington referred to your ministry spending \$56,000 on a company that

supposedly markets themselves as a wedding planner. I'm sure my constituents and my fellow educators would like to know whether or not this is the case, and if so, what services did they provide?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would like to take the opportunity to thank the member for Kitchener-Conestoga for the question so that I can take the opportunity to set the record straight, because it's really important to us that people in Ontario understand that the money that is spent by our government is spent in the best interest of the people of Ontario. From my ministry's perspective, that means the students, the teachers, the people who work in our schools and in our school communities.

I'm happy to report we did use a company called Eventfully Yours. There was no wedding planning as part of the use of that company. In fact, here is an e-mail from the president of the company, Sherri Jordan:

"Eventfully Yours Inc. is an innovative, cost-effective corporate event planning company. Since 1997, we have provided event management to companies of all sizes, primarily within the financial and not-for-profit sectors. Eventfully Yours has never been in the business of planning weddings and does not plan to do so in the future."

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I thank the minister for setting the record straight. The people of Ontario deserve information that is correct, and I humbly suggest that the member from Burlington take more care when doing her research in the future. I understand that Eventfully Yours was a successful bidder in a competitive process to provide services of event planning logistical support for ministry conferences. Would the minister please elaborate on these details?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Eventfully Yours was the successful bidder in a competitive process to provide services for two recent ministry events. The first one was the Circle of Light, which was a First Nation, Metis and Inuit education conference that happened from November 26 to 28, 2007, really a first in the history of the province in education, bringing together practitioners, non-aboriginal academics and aboriginal academics to talk about the delivery of aboriginal education.

In January 2008, the ministry held a two-day symposium on special education assessment and student evaluation, and I know that the member opposite would understand that it's extremely important that educators share information on those issues.

I said yesterday that I look forward to responding to the questions from the opposition. I think it's extremely important for a government to be held to account. I really hope that I'll have the chance to respond to thoughtful questions that are relevant to the people of Ontario.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Minister of Finance: Minister, on July 30, TD Economics released its special report entitled *Are the Wheels Falling Off the Ontario Economy?* The report begins:

"Major economic releases out of Ontario in recent weeks have put the province on a heightened state of recession alert. In early July, the Ontario government reported that real GDP contracted by 1.4% (annualized) in the first quarter, bringing the quarterly streak of little or no growth in the province to three."

Minister, given the most up-to-date figures available to you as the Minister of Finance, can you tell the Legislature, is Ontario now in a Dalton McGuinty recession?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Based on the numbers we have now, the consensus estimate of future performance of the economy is "no" to that question. That, of course, changes. It has changed since the budget. The consensus estimate has gone down. I'll remind the member opposite that what we need is a comprehensive approach to the challenges in our economy. Last year, for instance, we invested \$9.9 billion in infrastructure across Ontario, and you can see it. As you drive down the 401, as I do on my way home, you can see the cranes in community after community. Unlike the member opposite, we are working with the automotive sector to keep jobs in Ontario, recognizing the challenging economy. I think that what we all need to focus on is a response to the challenge in the economy that is prudent and balanced, and that will help protect jobs, secure future investments and keep Ontario strong and prosperous as we move forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Let me give the minister some economic updates: Recent releases from the Bank of Nova Scotia and the Royal Bank of Canada show that Ontario is dead last, or second last, in all of Confederation in economic growth. The Conference Board of Canada reported that Ontario's major cities, Toronto and Hamilton, are the slowest-growing cities in all of Canada under Dalton McGuinty.

Minister, people are losing their well-paying jobs. Families at GDx or John Deere in Welland and the Niagara peninsula are feeling the impact of Dalton McGuinty's failed tax-and-spend policies. The 500 people who have lost their jobs at Linamar, in Guelph, are feeling the impacts of Dalton McGuinty's failed tax-and-spend policies.

Minister, people are losing well-paying manufacturing jobs, and the cost of living is increasing for seniors and working families. Will you table immediately an economic statement and start to turn this province around?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What I say to those families is that their government is on their side, unlike the opposition. We are investing in skills trades to fill the jobs that go unfilled. We are investing in innovation, and later today, I'll be introducing the ideas for Ontario's future act, which will encourage innovation. We are investing \$9.9 billion in infrastructure to help deal in the short term with jobs and in the long term, with productivity. What we need is a federal partner, a federal partner that will treat Ontarians fairly, a federal partner that will say to the unemployed people who were laid off at those plants that they'll get the same amount of employment insurance as people in other parts of the country.

Will you in the opposition—we welcome your initiatives—stand up for Ontario? It's about fairness. It's about treating workers properly and making the proper investments in our economic—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

C. DIFFICILE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre, est c'est au sujet des infections à la bactérie C. difficile.

At the end of this month, I understand that Ontario hospitals will report the number of cases of C. difficile infections within their institutions.

En fait, j'ai même eu la chance de rencontrer le Dr Baker quand il est venu à Sudbury pour expliquer les nouvelles procédures à l'hôpital régional, Sudbury Regional Hospital.

But what Ontarians really want to know is why your government has not mandated hospitals to report the deaths directly related to the C. difficile inspection, like they do in Quebec, like they do in the UK and in other jurisdictions around the world. Ontarians want to know.

1130

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I welcome the question. I want to take this opportunity first in this Legislature to extend my sympathies to all families who have been affected by C. difficile. I want to assure my colleagues and Ontarians and particularly those families who have been affected that we're doing everything that we need to do to improve the safety conditions to be found in our hospitals.

My colleague knows that we've asked Dr. Baker to be our provincial lead on patient safety to help us with this. We're going to be providing public information for the first time at the end of this week, this very Friday, to ensure that Ontarians get a better understanding of exactly the case. I think that when they have an opportunity to see how we compare with other provinces, they'll see that we're performing quite well. There's always more to be done, but we look forward to making that information public for the very first time.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary? The member for Hamilton—Centre.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The unfortunate thing is, we learn more about the C. difficile epidemic from the Hamilton Spectator than we do from the Premier of the province. According to the Spectator, 91 people at Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital have died because the government failed to issue clear guidelines on how to identify outbreaks and help prevent C. difficile from spreading.

Since the Premier refuses to give the public the full story, will he allow the Ombudsman to investigate or provide a full public review to determine how many people have in fact died from C. difficile in this province? And if not, why not, when this is literally a life and death issue?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, my advice to my colleague and the reassurance that we're providing to Ontarians is, let's just wait for this information to come out on Friday. Let's just wait for associated information, as well, to see in particular how we are comparing with our fellow provinces across the country.

We have taken a number of steps—this is just the latest. One of the things that we did back in 2004 was to establish something called the Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee. There were a number of recommendations that flowed from their work, including putting in place handwashing guidelines and education programs inside our hospitals. They have issued best practices, warnings and held education sessions on C. difficile. As I say, this will culminate with public reporting at the end of this week. I would ask my colleagues opposite to wait for that information to be made available, and I think that will go a long way toward reassuring Ontario families.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Mr. Jeff Leal: Supporting our artists and cultural organizations is important for communities across Ontario and in my riding of Peterborough. Over the last month and a half, the Harper Conservatives have voted a series of funding cuts to arts and cultural programs estimated to be more than \$45 million. These federal programs provide crucial support for artists and cultural organizations by helping them to promote their products and attract foreign investors. Many of these affected groups have expressed their disappointment in the Harper Conservatives' decision, including Artspace in my riding of Peterborough.

Can the Minister of Culture tell this House what the government's position is on the federal government's cut to arts and cultural programs?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: I thank my honourable colleague for his concern about our program and how it impacts the community of Peterborough.

I, too, have been deeply concerned—I would say flabbergasted—that the Harper Conservatives have cut the programs that support Canada's cultural sector. Canada's cultural sector generates \$46 billion to the national economy, and almost half of that is generated right here in the province of Ontario. And it is the last time—it is not the time in any way that the Harper government should be cutting valuable programs that produce the very economic benefits I've been listening to the opposition talk about this morning, such as skills development, the knowledge-based economy and stronger planning for growth. That's why I am calling on all the federal parties to make this an issue. It's also why, when I'm in Quebec City on Friday with my provincial colleagues, we will be addressing this issue and responding to the Harper government's cuts.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'm pleased to hear that the McGuinty government is standing with our arts and culture com-

munity by calling on all federal parties to commit to restoring the cultural funding that the Harper Conservatives have slashed. Artists and cultural organizations in my riding of Peterborough and Ontario will be pleased that they have a strong provincial partner as they urge all federal parties to reverse the Harper Conservative cuts. But a strong provincial partner ultimately means that the provincial government must do its part to help this important sector. Can the Minister of Culture tell this House what our government is doing to support Ontario's cultural sector?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: I'm more than pleased to comply with that request. The McGuinty government really understands that investing in arts and culture builds strong, vibrant communities. It is also a major drive to economic prosperity. While the Harper government has cut more than \$45 million in arts and culture—confirmed, by the way, by the *Globe and Mail's* recent stories—the McGuinty government has increased annual funding to the Ontario Arts Council by \$20 million, which brings that to \$60 million. That represents a 140% increase to the Ontario Arts Council, which is, compared to the previous Tory government, double what they invested.

As Minister of Culture, I assure this House that I am going to continue to advocate on the part of our sector, continue to advocate for the 250,000 artists who work in the province of Ontario.

PROPANE EXPLOSION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: To the Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services: After the massive and deadly explosion at Sunrise Propane on August 10 in Toronto, why did it take him three full days before responding publicly to this crisis? As the minister responsible for public confidence with the TSSA, the Technical Standards and Safety Authority, how can he explain his utter failure to act during that crisis?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I am actually very pleased to answer this question. First of all, I want to say again that this incident is of great concern to our government, and our government acted very quickly. On August 18, I basically ordered that all propane facilities similar to Sunrise should be audited, and that audit was actually completed in less than one week. In addition to that, I have also asked the experts to look into best practices around the world so that we can implement them, so that this kind of incident doesn't happen again.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Eight days after the fact is too late, and a review panel is not needed to tell you what you already knew. Two people are dead, thousands were displaced, with no answers from you for days. Regulation of inspections and locations for propane facilities near residential neighbourhoods has always resided with the Minister of Consumer Services, yet he had no public meetings and offered no immediate help: The minister for public confidence ignored the public. Again I ask him, can he explain his utter failure to communicate with the public during this crisis?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me just say this again. My sympathies are with the families of Parminder Saini and Bob Leek. I had the chance to call Parminder Saini's family in India, and they actually came to my office last week and expressed their profound thanks for what I did for that family, including talking to the police officers here so that they could keep the communications open.

I was at the site two days after. I'm not sure where the member was, except in Ottawa giving the statements. She should have been there and looked at the site herself. We were there. The Premier was there. I was there. Most of the members of our caucus have been there, and we have taken very concrete action. I want to assure the public out there that we're going to do absolutely everything that is possible to make sure that this kind of incident never happens in Ontario again.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. On July 20, a hydro vault exploded at 2 Secord Avenue. The 900 people who lived in that building were forced out of their homes and were lucky to be alive. For six weeks, those tenants had no access whatsoever to their homes. The misnamed Tenant Protection Act provided no protection at all for these people. The city of Toronto generously provided housing for many families who had no place else to go, but ministry officials claimed no responsibility whatsoever. What plans do you have to ensure that tenants who are victims of future extraordinary circumstances like this will be protected by their provincial government?

1140

Hon. Jim Watson: It's the Residential Tenancies Act that I believe the honourable member is referring to. Let me just begin by expressing our concern to those residents who were forced out of their homes as a result of the activities at the apartment building. But let me also express my gratitude and appreciation for the Toronto Fire Services, for the police, for the paramedics, for all of the emergency workers who worked very closely along with the not-for-profit groups, like the Salvation Army and the Red Cross, which were involved in helping to find places for these people to live while the building was rehabilitated.

There's no question that the lead responsibility for the particular activity was with the city of Toronto. I commend the city of Toronto for the good work they did. Our staff were there and available to assist them. The Residential Tenancies Act, which many members of the opposition actually voted against, gives greater protection to tenants than the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened carefully to what the minister had to say, and he never once said anything that his ministry accomplished during that unfortunate circumstance. The act actually punished the families at 2

Secord Avenue by not providing them with the ability to get out of their lease and thereby find alternative places to live. The owner of the property first said that they could break the lease and then subsequently refused to allow that to happen.

Will the government introduce changes to the act today that will help tenants who face extraordinary circumstances by allowing them to break their leases in crises, like the events at 2 Secord Avenue, so that they can go out and find somewhere else to live rather than to be on the streets or in hotel rooms provided by the city?

Hon. Jim Watson: Let me just clarify one point: The Residential Tenancies Act does allow tenants to appeal to the Landlord and Tenant Board, seeking remedies as one course of action.

The second point is, I think the honourable member does bring up a very valid concern. I'm quite prepared to ask our officials to examine those provisions that he has raised. At the end of day, our concern has to be with the families who have been displaced. I think the honourable member does bring up some valid and legitimate concerns.

We're very proud of the Residential Tenancies Act. It just passed a couple of years ago. We think it's a more progressive, balanced piece of legislation than was there before. If we can improve on that specific piece of legislation, particularly as a result of what we learned with the Secord Avenue explosion, then we're happy to do so.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for Minister of Labour. I too would like to take a moment to congratulate the minister in his new position.

Minister, I have stood in this House before and asked questions about an issue that is of interest to my constituents: temporary employment agencies. These agencies supply workers in a wide range of occupations, and an employee of an agency might be assigned to a single client or business for several months or even years. This has raised questions about whether temporary help agency workers are being treated fairly compared to permanent or regular employees. This issue, it is my understanding, continues to be brought to the attention of your ministry by many individuals and groups. Would this minister tell us what our government is currently doing about the challenges faced by temporary workers in Ontario?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I thank the member for York South-Weston for bringing this very important issue forward. Our government is very committed to ensuring that employees through temporary help agencies are properly protected under the law. We have indeed heard a number of these issues from employees and employers, both partners, as well as the general public. The issues that have been brought to our attention raise concerns about certain practices that are taking place with temporary agencies. My parliamentary assistant, Vic Dhillon,

began this consultation and this work on temporary employment agencies. This consultation took place this summer; it continues.

I ask that the public bring forward some of their feedback to the Ministry of Labour regarding this very important consultation. They can provide the information to us through the Ministry of Labour's website. We want to hear from them. I look forward to the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: It is important to know that our government is acting on and addressing outstanding issues for temporary employees in Ontario.

Many of my constituents have asked me about their rights as temporary employees. Many have told me about their problems in the workplace and their efforts to voice their concerns about their workplace issues. It is a benefit to my constituents that the government listens to the concerns being expressed by vulnerable workers in this province and takes them seriously.

Minister, you have explained what we are currently doing. Can you please tell this House what our government is planning to do in the longer term to help temporary agency workers?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I thank the member for giving me the opportunity to share with this House how we are moving forward. I want to let her know that our government is working hard to protect the rights of workers in this province, including those who work for temporary employment agencies. My ministry has over 140 inspectors who go out, checking employment standards, and they investigate over 20,000 claims a year. The ministry has identified temporary workers as an area that needs to be focused on. Our enforcement staff has added additional support materials to assist in those inspections.

We also want to ensure that Ontario's employment legislation reflects the realities of today's workplace. For this reason, I look forward to hearing from Ontarians who have something to say about this very important issue.

I would also like to personally encourage all people across this province to give us their input, their comments and their suggestions during this consultation period.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development. This summer has not been kind to Ontario, sir. In Willowdale, there were 2,000 jobs lost, in Welland there were over 1,000 jobs lost, in St. Thomas over 1,000 jobs lost, in Oshawa over 1,000 jobs lost, in Oxford 800, in Oakville 500, in Guelph 800—apparently the plan's working in Guelph. The list goes on—over 21,000 net jobs lost in the manufacturing sector in Ontario in the last three months—and where was the McGuinty government? They were missing in action.

Workers who once held great full-time positions now work two or three part-time jobs while others don't work at all, and economists say that the future is looking

worse. The short-sighted policies of your predecessor failed. She doled out millions in corporate welfare, only to see more pink slips and more devastated families and more lost taxes.

Minister, how will you distance yourself from these failed strategies? What new actions will you take to improve Ontario's business climate?

Hon. Michael Bryant: I appreciate the member's question, especially because he very transparently put his finger right on it. Every jurisdiction that is seeking to be competitive, that is seeking to improve productivity and innovation, is recognizing that that requires government to be there for employees—for training, yes, but also to employers and to the industry. That assistance to employers is what the member refers to as corporate welfare. In this global economy, where businesses are considering whether to stay or move here to Ontario, they look at what the costs are going to be, what the climate is going to be, and whether or not the government is there to provide investments in capital, for instance, that will allow them to be more productive and innovative.

That's the difference between this government and the Conservative Party. They would do nothing for those businesses. This government is stepping forward to provide assistance to retain—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I congratulate the minister. At least he understands the problem. The problem is that Ontario has the highest taxes of any jurisdiction in North America. We have certainly the highest taxes in Canada. All of the companies that are moving to Ontario look at those things and say, "Ontario is not where we want to be."

The minister is offering, so far, nothing new. If he doesn't offer something new, then the cabinet shuffle is meaningless; it's just a new face with the same policies.

Minister, you're a bright guy. You went to Harvard; you've got to be a bright guy. You can think for yourself and you can take some initiative. If you are stuck for some answers, we would be happy to help you. We had an economic summit, and we would be glad to share some of those things.

Minister, I ask you again: What new economic development issues are you willing to bring to the table to turn—

1150

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Michael Bryant: The only person who said, "Don't come and invest in Ontario," was the federal Minister of Finance, Mr. Flaherty.

With respect to tax relief, I say to the member, don't take my word for it. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business said: "We must acknowledge the tax relief that has been delivered over the past few years" by the provincial government. "Relief has been both vital and welcome in: corporate capital tax, corporate income tax and provincial property tax portion. That some of the

recent relief came early in the December 2007 economic statement was supported by CFIB as a way to help shield our Ontario economy from being side-swiped...."

But that's not the only approach of this government. It is, yes, strategic tax relief, but it is also strategic investments for the workers and for the businesses to create jobs. We were doing that and we are doing—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. New question.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Premier, through your government, the Ontario Northland commission has announced cuts to bus services along the northeastern Ontario corridor that they serve. There has been a recommendation by the ONTC that they're going to do this by October 1. It is not going well with people because the more you cut services, the less people take the bus, the less viable that service becomes over the longer run.

So my question to you is simply this. There's been a suggestion made by the Teamsters and by member communities that are serviced by the ONTC to delay this decision at least until January so that the ONTC can consult municipalities, riders and the unions about other steps they can take in order to save dollars. My question to you is, are you prepared to grant that request to delay the implementation until January 1?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you very much for the question. It's an excellent question to ask, because we're very much aware of the reliance of individuals in that area on this kind of service. I can say to the member that we are always willing to consider any and every idea that happens to come forward. I recognize these changes are certainly an inconvenience to people, and in some cases it's quite essential. I want to at least say to the member that I will go back to my staff, I will talk to them and try to provide the necessary information to bring together so that we can give full consideration to the member's request.

I want to, as well, congratulate him while I can for being a candidate for leader of the third party. I notice some changes in him already that are clearly a part of running for the leadership, and I wish him well in that endeavour.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended.

MEMBER'S COMMENTS

Mr. Ted Arnott: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: During question period, the member for Kitchener-Conestoga asked a question of the Minister of Education. It clearly was set up as an effort to criticize the member for Burlington. In the past, previous Speakers have ruled

that it's inappropriate to use question period time to engage in personal attacks on other members. I would ask you to review the Hansard and report back to the House as to whether or not this was an inappropriate use of question period time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the honourable member for his point of order, and I will oblige his request and, in consultation with the Clerk's table, review the Hansard.

I would, just as a general note, remind all members that we are in an adversarial world of politics within this chamber, but at the same time, on all fronts, we do need to maintain respect for one another as members. We may come from different parties and different philosophies, but we are all here representing the same constituents. I would ask members on all sides to be conscious of it. But we will review that.

The government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. Michael Bryant: Mr. Speaker, just to that point of order: As you review it, I would certainly say that if you look at the words, they were, I think, quite carefully worded so that there in fact was no criticism personally of the member. There was criticism about the substance and the research, but there was no criticism of the member. I would ask that as you review it—of course, I would anticipate you would look at whether or not there was a personal ad hominem address in there. I would say, listening very carefully to the question, that there was none whatsoever, but it is in your hands now.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the honourable member. That review will be undertaken.

It is time for petitions.

PETITIONS

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Ms. Laurie Scott: A petition for fair journeymen tradespeople to apprenticeship ratios:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current journeymen tradespeople to apprenticeship ratios in the manufacturing and construction sectors in Ontario are both outdated and unfair; and

"Whereas the ratio of journeymen tradespeople to apprenticeship in many other jurisdictions in Canada is already one to one; and

"Whereas the current journeymen tradespeople to apprenticeship ratios put small and medium-sized businesses in Ontario requiring skilled trades at a disadvantage to other provinces; and

"Whereas MPP Laurie Scott and MPP Garfield Dunlop have both brought forward notices of motion requesting the government and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to make the necessary regulatory changes to current ratios;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately make the necessary regulatory changes to accommodate the construction and manufacturing trades so that the ratio of journeymen tradespeople to apprentices be one to one."

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition put together by the Ontario Health Coalition and supported by the people of Niagara Falls and Fort Erie.

"Whereas understaffing in Ontario's nursing homes is a serious problem resulting in inadequate care for residents and unsafe conditions for staff;

"Whereas after the Harris government removed the regulations providing minimum care levels in 1995, hours of care dropped below the previous 2.25 hour/day minimum;

"Whereas the recent improvements in hours of care are not adequate, vary widely and are not held to accountable standards;

"Whereas there is currently nothing in legislation to protect residents and staff from renewed cuts to care levels by future governments;

"Whereas care needs have measurably increased with aging and the movement of people with more complex health needs from hospitals into long-term-care homes...."

Therefore, they petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

They call on the government of Ontario to "immediately enact and fund an average care standard of 3.5 hours per resident per day in the regulations under the new Long-Term Care Homes Act."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it with page Marissa.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, and it is in support of the proposed western Mississauga ambulatory surgery centre. It reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin

planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition and to ask page Elizabeth to carry it for me.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the skyrocketing price of gasoline is causing hardship to families across Ontario; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government charges a gasoline tax of 14.7 cents per litre to drivers in all parts of Ontario; and

"Whereas gasoline tax revenues now go exclusively to big cities with transit systems, while roads and bridges crumble in other communities across Ontario; and

"Whereas residents of Wellington-Halton Hills have been shut out of provincial gasoline tax revenues to which they have contributed; and

"Whereas whatever one-time money has flowed to municipalities from the McGuinty Liberal government has been neither stable nor predictable and has been insufficient to meet our infrastructure needs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to redistribute provincial gasoline tax revenues fairly to all communities across the province."

I want to thank Mark and Connie Robinson as well as Isabel McCutcheon for helping to contribute these signatures from the riding of Perth-Wellington to my petition.

1200

WORKPLACE HARASSMENT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I have a petition signed by a number of Hamilton-Wentworth elementary teachers as well as postal workers and many other citizens. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas workplace harassment (physical and psychological) and violence need to be defined as violations of the Occupational Health and Safety Act so that it is dealt with as quickly and earnestly by employers as other health and safety issues and;

"Whereas employers will have a legal avenue/obligation to deal with workplace harassment and violence in all its forms, including psychological harassment, and;

"Whereas Bill 29 would make it law to protect workers from workplace harassment by giving workers the right to refuse to work after harassment has occurred, require an investigation of allegations of workplace-related harassment, and oblige employers to prevent further occurrences of workplace-related harassment;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislature Assembly of Ontario to treat workplace harassment and violence as a serious health and safety issue by passing MPP Andrea Horwath's Bill 29, which would bring workplace harassment and violence under the scope of the Occupational Health And Safety Act."

Obviously, I agree with this and am sending it with page Paige to the table.

CHILD CUSTODY

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Chair recognizes the member for Niagara Falls. A belated happy birthday to the member; I understand it was your birthday yesterday. All the best.

Mr. Kim Craiton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The petition reads as follows. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents as requested in Bill 33 put forward by MPP Kim Craiton.

"Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant's willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child.

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents."

I sign my signature in support and I'm pleased to give this to page Karlie to present.

ANGUS EARLY YEARS CENTRE

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the way in which we care for children during their first six years sets the stage for a child's lifelong learning, behaviour and health; and

"Whereas the Angus Early Years Centre offers vital services to help parents and caregivers in all aspects of

early childhood development, including early learning and literacy programs and important links to early years programs in the community; and

"Whereas E3 Community Services is currently reviewing the feasibility of continuing to operate the Angus Early Years Centre;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Children and Youth Services take every step necessary to ensure that the Early Years Centre at 211 Mill Street in Angus remains open so that it can continue to be a place where parents and caregivers can get answers to questions from early years professionals and so that they can continue to participate in the excellent programs that are currently being offered in Angus."

I agree with this petition and sign it, and I'm going to hand it to page Michael Ralphs, who is from the great riding of Simcoe-Grey.

PROTECTION FOR MINERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition prepared by the family of Lyle Defoe and supported by the people of Sudbury and Nickel Belt, including people from Coniston, Capreol, Hanmer and Val Caron.

"Whereas the current legislation contained in the Ontario health and safety act and regulations for mines and mining plants does not adequately protect the lives of miners, we request revisions to the act;

"Lyle Everett Defoe and the scoop-tram he was operating fell 150 feet down an open stope (July 23, 2007). Lyle was 25 years and 15 days old when he was killed at Xstrata Kidd Creek mine site, Timmins.

"Section R-60 (page 60 of Mining Regulations), paragraph 74 states that, 'A shaft, raise or other opening in an underground mine shall be securely fenced, covered or otherwise guarded. RRO 1990, Reg. 854s 75(1).' The stope where Lyle was killed was protected by a length of orange plastic snow fence and a rope with a warning sign. These barriers would not have been visible if the bucket of the scoop-tram" he was driving "was raised. Lyle's body was recovered from behind the scoop tram.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Concrete berms must be mandatory to protect all open stopes and raises;

"All miners and contractors working underground must have working communication devices and personal locators;

"All equipment involved in injuries and fatalities must be recovered and examined unless such recovery would endanger the lives of others; and

"The entire act must be reviewed and amended to better protect underground workers."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it with page Supriya.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Joe Dickson: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Rouge Valley Health board reversed the 2006 announcement closing the maternity and pediatric services at the Ajax-Pickering hospital due to an overwhelming public outcry; and

"Whereas the Rouge Valley Health board of directors has recently approved closing the 20-bed mental health patient unit at the Ajax-Pickering hospital; and

"Whereas there remains further concern by residents for future maternity/pediatric closings, particularly with the new birthing unit at Centenary hospital, which will see 16 new labour, delivery, recovery and postpartum ... birthing rooms and an additional 21 postpartum rooms opening this fall in 2008 ...; and

"Whereas there is a natural boundary, the Rouge Valley, that clearly separates the two distinct areas of Scarborough and Durham region;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Central East Local Health Integration Network ... and the Rouge Valley Health System ... board of directors review the Rouge Valley Health System make-up and group Scarborough Centenary hospital with the three other Scarborough hospitals; and

"Further, that we position the Ajax-Pickering hospital within Lakeridge Health, thus combining all of our hospitals in Durham region under one Durham region administration."

I shall affix my signature and pass this to page Paige.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current journeymen tradespeople to apprenticeship ratios in the manufacturing and construction sectors in Ontario are both outdated and unfair; and

"Whereas the ratio of journeymen tradespeople to apprenticeship in many other jurisdictions in Canada is already one to one; and

"Whereas the current journeymen tradespeople to apprenticeship ratios put small and medium-sized businesses in Ontario requiring skilled trades at a disadvantage to other provinces; and

"Whereas MPP Laurie Scott and MPP Garfield Dunlop have both brought forward notices of motion requesting the government and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to make the necessary regulatory changes to current ratios;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately make the necessary regulatory changes to accommodate the construction and manufacturing trades so that the ratio of journeymen tradespeople to apprentices be one to one."

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France G  linas: I'm glad to rise today to read a petition prepared by the Ontario Health Coalition and signed and supported by the people of Windsor and Fort Erie.

"Whereas understaffing in Ontario's nursing homes is a serious problem resulting in inadequate care for residents and unsafe conditions for staff;

"Whereas after the Harris government removed the regulations providing minimum care levels in 1995, hours of care were dropped from the minimum of 2.25 hours/day;

"Whereas the recent improvements in hours of care are not adequate, vary widely and are not held to accountable standards;

"Whereas there is currently nothing in legislation to protect residents and staff from renewed cuts to care levels by future governments; and

"Whereas care needs have measurably increased with aging and the movement of people with more serious and complex health needs from hospitals into long-term-care homes;"

They petition the Ontario government to "Immediately enact and fund an average care standard of 3.5 hours per resident per day in the regulations under the Long-Term Care Homes Act."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it with page Michael.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for petitions is about to expire. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1209 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

RAYWAL ODOUR RESIDENTS WATCH

Mr. Peter Shurman: I rise today on behalf of the people of my riding living in the vicinity of the Raywal Kitchens plant in Thornhill. My purpose is to put the Minister of the Environment on notice.

The Raywal Odour Residents Watch, a community group with whom I've been working to ensure enforcement of environmental legislation, has been actively seeking the minister's assistance to protect residents from excessive fumes and pollution, but to no avail. So far, the minister, his inspectors and the ministry's investigators have failed to do so. Repeatedly, the grievances of the community have fallen on deaf ears. My constituents tell me that the York-Durham district office of the ministry has offered them little more than lip service and excuses instead of action, all of this on the minister's watch. Meanwhile, I am receiving reports that residents are becoming ill, that their quality of life has been sabotaged and that they can derive no enjoyment from their properties.

This is not new, but it's extremely serious and it's extremely urgent now. It is high time the ministry took my concerns and the complaints of my constituents seriously. As the member of provincial Parliament for Thornhill, I demand a proper scientific investigation of the problems, appropriate ministry orders to resolve the situation, and enforcement of those orders to completion.

It is time the minister did his job to ensure the health and safety of the people of Thornhill.

RESIDENTIAL SPRINKLERS

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: This weekend in Minneapolis, the International Code Council, an association dedicated to building safety and fire prevention in the United States, overwhelmingly backed code changes that would make residential sprinklers mandatory in all new one- and two-family dwellings.

In June, our government brought forward changes to the building code mandating sprinklers in all new high-rise residential construction beginning in 2010.

This weekend in the Toronto Star, they reported that some builders are installing systems before the deadline. The vice-president of Canderel Stoneridge Equity Group, who are developing a 75-storey condominium, said, "It's not about marketing, it's about safety. All 930 units will have sprinklers. Sprinklers save lives." He says customer feedback consistently shows high-rise fire ranks high amongst buyers' concerns and that the decision to install sprinklers is resonating with those buyers.

Our government has done the right thing with respect to high-rise residences. I want Ontario to continue to move forward in making all buildings safer in the future. I encourage our government to follow the historic example set by the International Code Council and demonstrate that Ontario is a leader in protecting what is most valuable to all Ontarians, their lives.

PREMIER'S PETITION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The Premier's so-called fairness plan and his petition—it's a sham, just like his economic plan. The Premier is trying to deflect attention from the 200,000 manufacturing jobs that have left this province under his watch. He is trying to distract us from his dismal economic plan and his results.

The Globe and Mail today reported that his plans and his pleas for a fairer deal from Ottawa are "falling on deaf ears in his own province." Why? Because people right across this province are worried about their future and their kids' futures. Ontarians want meaningful and effective action, not more blame-game stunts, and that's what he's doing with pulling this petition out.

When is the Premier going to stop blaming everyone else and do something for once? His petition is a sham because, in Ontario, we all know this Legislature does not accept online petitions. This means that anyone who signs this illegitimate petition is wasting their precious time.

We all in this province and in this Legislature want a stronger Ontario, but the Premier has got to stop blaming everyone under the sun, including Stephen Harper, and he's got to start acting like a Premier. I know that over the weeks ahead we're going to have meaningful debate in this Legislature about the economic inaction of the Liberal government.

SOFTBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: September is the return to school, and for every student it is the opportunity to recount what they did for the summer. A group of girls in the Melbourne area in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex have the added excitement of being able to brag about winning back-to-back Ontario Rural Softball Association provincial championships in the Atom B division for both 2007 and 2008. These seven- to 10-year-old girls dominated the regular season, coached by Millar Nicol and Greg Prichard. Then they were undefeated in the Melbourne tournament, and finally they captured their second consecutive championship in the ORSA competition.

I had the opportunity to speak to these young ladies in Glencoe last Saturday as they waited on a parade float. They were appropriately proud of their achievement as they sang out cheers to demonstrate their team solidarity.

The girls deserve full credit for their hard work at bat and dominance in pitching. Winning back-to-back championships not only proves that they have what it takes to be champions, but it also speaks volumes about what young people can achieve when a team bonds the way these girls have.

I want to congratulate the Melbourne Atom fastball team and all these girls as they enjoy a banquet in their honour in southwest Middlesex on October 18.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Toby Barrett: I offer a welcome to Brad Duguid, the member for Scarborough Centre, as the new face at aboriginal affairs. I have a question: What did he do to deserve this appointment? As I stand in the House, we have difficulty seeing him. His predecessor sat in the front row, right next to the Speaker, and the minister is back in the third row. I was asked this morning, "What does this mean?" Perhaps the Premier is taking the minister back behind the sofa with him with respect to land disputes.

You've had Caledonia for two and a half years, and now Brantford. This government has had Ipperwash for five years now and accomplished nothing, not even the promised legislation. There's nothing on the docket for this fall.

Where are the priorities? Will you immediately relocate Dave and Dana Brown? They've spent the last two and a half years in hell, adjacent to DCE. This family's safety and their health have been at risk for far too long, and the community is very concerned for them.

I ask the minister to come to Caledonia and witness first-hand the problems this land dispute has created. Come to Brantford; come to Dunnville; come to York; come to Hagersville. We don't need a new face, we don't necessarily need a new beginning; we need an end. Those involved in the crisis know little to nothing about Minister Duguid. We ask him to go out and make a name for himself.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Mr. Rosario Marchese: On September 3 I attended an event at the Theatre Centre, attended by I would say over 300 people from the different disciplines in the arts—painters, dancers, writers, actors, designers, filmmakers, sculptors, performers, directors, curators, musicians, architects, fashion designers and more—to defend themselves and organize against the assault on the arts by the federal government when it decided to eliminate \$60 million from the cultural and heritage granting programs. These programs are many: the PromArt program—close to \$5 million cut by—

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's good to have you here, Minister.

Trade Routes—\$9 million, the Department of Canadian Heritage; stabilization projects and capacity building of the Canadian Arts and Heritage Sustainability Program—\$3.4 million; the Canadian Independent Film and Video Fund—\$1.5 million gone; the national training program in the film and video sector—\$2.5 million gone; the Canadian New Media Fund—\$14.5 million gone.

People like Claire Hopkinson, Toronto Arts Council, Susan Swan, former president of the Writers Union, and Naomi Klein, writer and political analyst, were there to defend the arts and defend against the cuts. They set up a group called the Department of Culture, and you can visit that group at www.departmentofculture.ca to get a sense of how we organize against—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

1510

WELDING WEEK

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: According to a recent study, the welding industry employs over 300,000 Canadians and contributes over \$5 billion to our economy each year. It is very important to our manufacturing and construction industries. Unfortunately, the industry is facing a severe labour shortage as fewer students graduate with a welding education and as the aging welding workforce begins to retire.

To draw attention to this, I am proud to say that the Canadian Welding Association is celebrating the first-ever National Welding Week from September 22 to 27, 2008. This initiative will help to make Canadians aware of the important role of welding in their lives and encourage students to consider welding as a career.

The Canadian Welding Association is developing a national program in support of welding education in high

schools. It recently contributed \$20,000 toward the specialist high skills major program at Barton Secondary School in my riding of Hamilton Mountain, and has contributed over \$300,000 to welding programs at 30 high schools in Hamilton and the greater Golden Horseshoe region.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all members of the House join in celebration of the Canadian Welding Association's Welding Week and encourage young Ontarians to consider welding as a viable career option.

ALGOMA UNIVERSITY

Mr. David Oraziotti: Earlier this month I was joined by Premier McGuinty in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie to officially open the new, independent Algoma University. It was fitting that the Premier was on hand for this historic event, as it was under his direction that our government dedicated the time and resources necessary to ensure that the process was successful, culminating with Minister Milloy's spearheading legislation that passed earlier this spring.

The young people whom the Premier and I welcomed back to school a few weeks ago will be the first to attend the stand-alone degree-granting institution in the Soo. They will have access to expanded learning opportunities and a chance to complete their education in the community with the support of their families and friends.

With independence, the school is projected to more than double in size to approximately 3,000 students and increase enrolment from across the province and around the globe.

Here's what Dr. Celia Ross, president of Algoma University, had to say: "The entire university community, and the community of Sault Ste. Marie, is celebrating. Already we are able to offer a wider array of degree programs to our students, and that trend will continue. We are building stronger partnerships to benefit the students of Ontario, and we will be a significant contributor to the development of northern Ontario."

Our government also announced new funding that would help the university attract more students, bring in research dollars and create more high-paying jobs for northern and aboriginal students.

Granting independent university status to Algoma is part of our government's plan to ensure that students in all parts of the province are prepared for the next generation of jobs so that Ontario can continue to compete in the new economy.

CANDLELIGHTERS CHILDHOOD CANCER FOUNDATION

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: It is my pleasure to rise in the House today to highlight the good work of the Candlelighters childhood cancer support program in the city of Ottawa. Each year, approximately 400 children are diagnosed with cancer in Ontario. More than one child per week will be diagnosed with cancer in eastern Ontario, of

whom 65 will receive treatment at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario.

The Candlelighters organization offers tremendous support to families coping with the daily realities of childhood cancer. They provide the simple things that mean a lot to families: financial assistance, programs that help families cope and informal weekly drop-in sessions for parents and caregivers.

Candlelighters have been working hard to raise awareness about childhood cancer, including organizing local activities to promote awareness about this important issue. Today I'm wearing the Candlelighters pin in recognition of their efforts to have September recognized as Child Cancer Awareness Month. I encourage all members to show their support by wearing the same pin.

Today I am joined by Brian Heaney, chair; Jocelyn Lamont, executive director; and Tamsin Roach from Candlelighters, who are hosting an information reception this evening in committee room 230. I encourage all members of the House, on both sides of the aisle, to join with me this evening to find out more about the work of this wonderful organization. Thank you very much.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Perhaps the member for Ottawa Centre may want to seek unanimous consent to be wearing that pin.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I thank you for the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, and I seek unanimous consent of this House to wear the childhood cancer awareness pin on behalf the Candlelighters organization.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report of intended appointments dated September 23, 2008, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies.

Pursuant to standing order 107(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR DES IDÉES D'AVENIR

Mr. Duncan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 100, An Act to amend the Corporations Tax Act and the Taxation Act, 2007 / Projet de loi 100, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'imposition des sociétés et la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The minister for a short statement?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: During ministerial statements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Hon. Dwight Duncan: A fast-moving global economy is the reality and Ontario must compete, and compete to win. Innovation is one of the keys to the future of our economy. This afternoon, I introduced the Ideas for the Future Act because we want Ontario to be a leader in innovative businesses.

This bill is meant to attract individuals with great ideas from all across Canada to set up their businesses in Ontario. If they qualify under this act, they would receive a 10-year corporate income tax exemption.

This bill would provide a tax incentive to qualifying corporations in Ontario to further the commercial strength of intellectual property. This 10-year corporate income tax exemption would be for new start-up companies that commercialize research from Canadian universities, colleges and research institutes.

This bill, if passed, would allow a start-up company to take new ideas developed at Canadian public research institutes to market and enable more highly skilled people to work in a more robust and productive economy.

Qualifying companies could be eligible to receive a refund of Ontario corporate income tax for each of their first 10 taxation years. The refund would be equal to the amount of income tax and corporate minimum tax paid by the qualifying corporation under the Corporations Tax Act and the Taxation Act, 2007.

This is historic, landmark legislation. The landmark corporate tax measure would be the first of its kind in Canada. It would help launch the next wave of Ontario's innovators by helping companies keep more of their income to invest and grow. It would also reinforce the critical role that universities and other public research institutes play in our economy and the next generation of jobs.

The measure would provide an incentive to firms that undertake the challenges of commercializing intellectual property or these ideas of the future. It would give these new companies a refund of all Ontario corporate income tax to reinvest in their businesses.

The McGuinty government recognizes the importance of innovation and our need to foster creativity in an increasingly competitive global market. This government believes that Canada's universities, colleges and research institutes provide a wealth of knowledge to be tapped into to capitalize on innovation.

My colleague the Honourable John Wilkinson, Minister of Research and Innovation, and I are working closely on this initiative that would create a better environment for business to generate more well-paying jobs.

This initiative would assist the culture of innovation for the creation of jobs in the high-priority areas of the economy. In addition, this legislation would provide for flexibility so that other innovative technologies can be added in the future.

This initiative complements existing programs that support commercial innovation, such as the Ontario commercialization investment funds administered by the Ministry of Research and Innovation.

I'd like to mention some of the key qualifications for this proposed tax incentive. The company must be a new start-up incorporated in Canada after March 24, 2008, and before March 25, 2012. Substantially, all of the company's revenues must come from a new active business in the priority areas for economic growth, which include advanced health, bioeconomy, which includes initiatives related to clean energy and telecommunications, and computer or digital media technologies. The company must be in the business of commercializing eligible intellectual property developed by a qualifying Canadian research institute.

This initiative would build on our existing measures to cut taxes for business, such as eliminating Ontario's capital tax and reducing high business education tax rates across Ontario.

1520

I ask for this Legislature to pass this measure so that we can get these ideas of the future working here in Ontario today to create revenues, and most importantly, to create jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm pleased to respond on behalf of the official opposition to the minister's announcement and introduction of the bill. The minister has been very good in providing detailed briefings to the official opposition, and we thank him for that and look forward to the opportunity to similarly walk through the bill piece by piece so that we can brief our respective caucuses on that.

In advance of the bill actually being introduced into the assembly today, there has been commentary on this—I guess the minister knows—some skepticism expressed, for example, by the C.D. Howe Institute, who on July—

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Oh no.

Mr. Tim Hudak: C.D. Howe was a Liberal minister, if I recall. The C.D. Howe Institute—

Interjections.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, he's dead. The C.D. Howe institute called it "ill-designed" and said, "Tax holidays, also used in Quebec, are high-cost, low-impact policies typically found in Third World countries and well proven to be ineffective." That was the C. D. Howe Institute in July 2008.

Jim Milway, the executive director of the government-funded Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity, criticized the government's decision to give the 10-year tax reduction to new businesses. "If a new technology becomes available," Mr. Milway said, "an existing business will have no particular incentive to develop it—even though an already-successful firm might be able to do so faster and better than a start-up company could. Lowering overall taxes would be more effective," Mr. Milway said. "It would do more for innovation." That was the *Ottawa Citizen*, April 30, 2008.

So certainly we will give the bill a full review. But the initial comments on the bill cast some question: if this is a better approach or rather what the PC caucus has brought forward, which is broad-based tax reductions. There seems to be a belief from Dalton McGuinty that Dalton McGuinty and his cabinet can choose the best companies to invest in, that they, more so than markets, will have the wisdom to determine which businesses are going to be successful and which are not, and allocate funds in the forms of grants or loans that way, and in this form of a tax holiday, a specific sector of the economy.

What John Tory and the Ontario PC caucus have suggested is that we need to lower the overall tax burden. Slightly after Dalton McGuinty was elected, he increased the business tax rate so that now Ontario has the highest burden of taxes in all of North America on new business investment. Roger Martin—

Interjections.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Some of my colleagues are heckling me, and I'll say back that Roger Martin, the dean of the Rotman School of Management, said, "In Ontario, we still have one of the highest marginal tax burdens on business investment in the world." And Roger Martin, at a recent economic summit that Mr. Tory, Mr. Chudleigh, Norm Miller and I hosted, said that we have one of the dumbest tax structures on the face of the planet. So we certainly hope that the McGuinty government will take our advice and lower the overall tax burden on the economy on businesses so that they can reinvest in our province.

When you see some 220,000 well—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just remind the government members that the opposition parties were respectful as the Minister of Finance delivered his address, and I would ask that that same respect be afforded to the opposition members. Thank you.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I'll continue. I appreciate that.

Roger Martin did indicate that taxes are among the highest in the world on business investment in Ontario. Ontario maintains the highest tax burden in Canada at 34.8%. And let's not forget that once taking office, Dalton McGuinty increased those taxes dramatically on businesses, and on working families and seniors in the province of Ontario. So what we suggest is to lower that tax burden, encourage businesses to invest to create real, well-paying jobs here in the Ontario economy, so that our talented young people—who, incidentally, left in record

numbers in 2007 to go to other provinces—to actually make their fortunes here and expand businesses and start up their own. We also believe that their energy policy has chased out significant jobs from the province of Ontario—now among the highest rates of energy costs compared to our competing provinces and states. No doubt the runaway spending increases of the McGuinty government, which would make Bob Rae blush, are also a disincentive to new business investment in this province, and that is why, while Dalton McGuinty will try to boast about jobs being created in the province, about half of them have been created in the government, many of which were created in the Premier's office, or those offices of his ministers, including a brand new ministry that won't create one new well-paying manufacturing job in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses? The member from Beaches—East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: Every day it seems we come into this Legislature, whether it was before the summer recess or now, and hear of hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs that have been lost; jobs across this province that people have relied upon for themselves and their families, jobs that I am afraid, once lost, may never return. We hear from them, and today we have a government response. I have to tell you that I am somewhat perplexed. In the fashion of this place, of course the minister stands up to speak and the minister tells us how wonderful he or she thinks their new policy is going to be. At the same time, the opposition parties are handed a copy of the bill and a compendium, and of course we have to scramble to try to read it. But in reading it, I want to contrast what the minister has to say with what the compendium has to say, because they appear very much to me to be at odds.

The minister stated: "Qualifying companies could be eligible to receive a refund of Ontario corporate income tax for each of their first 10 taxation years. The refund would be equal to the amount of income tax and corporate minimum tax paid by the qualifying corporation under the Corporations Tax Act and the Taxation Act, 2007."

I would like to contrast that with what the compendium says, because it seems to me that although it's not antithetical, it is very, very different. It says on the first page of the compendium: "A refund would only be made to the extent the corporation has complied with its continuing obligation to pay its corporate income tax for the year and any corporate minimum tax."

Now, it seems to me that that is not exactly the same as what the minister is trying to put forward. So I read more carefully into the compendium, trying to understand what in fact this bill says, and of course all I have is a whole bunch of gobbledygook. I challenge the minister to tell me or anybody watching the television what this means: "If the corporation's income for the taxation year under the Income Tax Act (Canada) is greater than zero, all or substantially all of its gross revenue for the year would have to be from one or more eligible commercialization businesses and all or substantially all amounts

received or receivable by it on the disposition of capital property would have to be from the disposition of capital property in the ordinary course of an eligible commercialization business."

That's all one sentence, and that's supposed to tell us what this bill is about. This bill is not about a whole lot; it's about the government trying to hide what is happening out there in industry. They are trying to hide what is happening in manufacturing. We have some very serious concerns about this bill, notwithstanding that it is unreadable, notwithstanding that it cannot be understood by ordinary mortals.

We have serious concerns about this bill and about the direction the Ontario government is heading on its commercialization of research. Ontario's total investment in research and development lags behind the G7 average. So although somebody could stand up today and say, "Isn't this a good thing that the Ontario government is doing today?" in fact, we are only doing it, or perhaps this minister is only doing it, because we are so far behind the G7 average.

It is the business sector in Ontario that has been underperforming, and perhaps that is why the minister is flush with his largesse here today, and we are lower in our business spending than any other place within the G7. This bill, if passed, would make everyday Ontarians pay for the R&D investment that businesses are not choosing to make in this province. I don't know why they are not choosing to make it, but this bill will put the shoulder and the responsibility on the ordinary taxpayer, who will now pay for those businesses to do what I would suppose they should have been doing all along. And the taxpayers are going to have to ask the question: Why should they be providing this cross subsidy?

1530

After the bill, not only will businesses get university research at a discount, they will also get a break on their corporate taxes. You know, that's the problem we have here. We are going to ask that universities, colleges, places of higher education, do the research. Then we are going to say that the Ontario taxpayer is going to subsidize that so that the businesses can make money. I am all in favour of research and I am all in favour of new jobs, but I wonder why this minister is putting the bill forward in this way that is going to cause ordinary taxpayers to foot the bill. I think there are better ways of doing it. He should find out about them and change the bill to accomplish that.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LAKE SIMCOE PROTECTION ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LA PROTECTION DU LAC SIMCOE

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 22, 2008, on the motion for second reading of Bill 99, An

Act to protect and restore the ecological health of the Lake Simcoe watershed and to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act in respect of water quality trading / Projet de loi 99, Loi visant à protéger et à rétablir la santé écologique du bassin hydrographique du lac Simcoe et à modifier la Loi sur les ressources en eau de l'Ontario en ce qui concerne un système d'échange axé sur la qualité de l'eau.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to be able to join the debate on second reading of Bill 99, the Lake Simcoe Protection Act. This is the government's latest attempt to present itself as a defender of Lake Simcoe without actually spending any money to help clean up the lake.

Before I discuss any of the provisions of the bill, I have one question for the government: Why do you continue to refuse to fund a cleanup for the lake? Your last budget did not provide any funding, this bill will not provide any, and we have no guarantee you will provide any funding in the future. In fact, there is reference throughout the bill to framework legislation. Is this bill simply a way for the Liberals to appear to be keeping a promise without actually doing anything? It reminds me of the status of the artist act, a promise made prior to the previous election, and then, throughout the time of office, not actually doing anything and finally passing, quite frankly, a meaningless act that allowed you to suggest you were keeping a promise.

If you wanted to help the lake, you could fund projects directly from the Ministry of the Natural Resources, which, by the way, is the historical lead ministry involved in the studies and projects that have been funded over the last many decades on Lake Simcoe, or certainly, the Ministry of the Environment as one of the ministries that is a partner in the LSEMS program. Or you could help Lake Simcoe municipalities with infrastructure funding for sewers and storm sewers, eliminating that source of runoff that goes into the lake. You could give money to the conservation authority to rejuvenate streams and their banks as well as protect wetlands.

The conservation authority already knows what needs to be done. In 2006, the authority completed an exhaustive comprehensive study with an estimate of the funding that was needed. To implement best management practices to accommodate then-current approved growth would cost \$163 million. The funding at the time was \$1.1 million. I'm not suggesting that you need to write a cheque for \$163 million, but you could start by funding projects that help the lake. What is needed is money, not new legislation or more bureaucracy.

So who understands that money is needed? Well, the federal Conservatives do. Unlike the McGuinty Liberal government, the federal government has actually put up cash for the lake. They created a \$30-million cleanup fund—a federal first, I might add—they established ecosystem protection from invasive species, they banned waste dumping, and they banned phosphates in detergent. My friend Peter Van Loan made some specific announcements less than a month ago. In my own riding,

the federal Conservatives will spend \$48,000 for the Maskinonge River adopt-a-watershed project; \$36,000 for the phosphorus-efficient agriculture for Lake Simcoe watershed project, and \$100,000 for the management and control of atmospheric sources of phosphorus to Lake Simcoe; \$70,000 for the Zephyr Creek and tributaries habitat restoration water quality improvement project.

These are only three of 36 projects worth \$1.9 million in 2008 alone that will help clean up Lake Simcoe. I might add that it's important to look at the fact that these sometimes are relatively small amounts of money, but they demonstrate the importance of the community understanding the value of some of these projects. The most expensive one listed is \$100,000 out of \$30 million, but it's the old story about adding up. Those individual projects all add up. With partners, these projects will put \$5 million towards the lake cleanup.

Another one announced in my riding, the Keswick storm water management study in my hometown of Georgina, will retrofit existing storm water control ponds and build new ponds to improve water quality.

These initiatives, I should add also, are in many cases pioneered, quite frankly, by the real science and research that has been done over the years by the conservation authority. These are real, tangible funding announcements.

The federal Conservatives are spending money and taking action to help the lake. Sadly, this bill that we are debating here does not provide any money for specific projects. I congratulate Peter Van Loan in my riding of York-Simcoe for fighting for this funding and achieving results. I congratulate Patrick Brown, member of Parliament for Barrie, for achieving funding of \$60,000 for Sophia Creek in his riding. The goal of this project is to improve the water quality of Sophia Creek that drains into Lake Simcoe by removing accumulated sediment and stabilizing the creek banks to reduce nutrient and sediment loading.

In the city of Barrie, \$315,000 will be spent on the Hotchkiss Creek outlet to Kempenfelt Bay to increase aquatic habitat, improve water quality, increase flow conveyance and enhance passive parkland.

Kidd's Creek erosion control will benefit from almost \$80,000 in federal funding, which will enhance aquatic habitat by improving the quality of storm runoff that drains from the creek into Lake Simcoe. I am very glad that Patrick Brown has achieved these results for his constituents in Barrie. Helping clean up the water that flows into the lake from his community will help everyone around the lake.

Bruce Stanton, MP for Simcoe North, announced federal funding for the Kitchener Park naturalization project; \$30,000 will be spent to reduce phosphorus inputs into the lake by planting a shoreline buffer strip to discourage geese from entering the park area. The new 10-metre-wide shoreline plantings will create a filtering system for the runoff from the park to the lake and will stabilize the shoreline to reduce erosion.

Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock MP Barry Devolin announced \$72,000 in funding for Lake Simcoe cleanups in Brock township and Kawartha Lakes.

These are all examples of the action that the federal MPs have taken for funding projects that will benefit Lake Simcoe. They did not wait around, and the federal Conservatives did not wait around to set up a plan or a committee before they took action.

The Ontario PC Party also knew that that was what was needed for Lake Simcoe. We had a 12-point plan for the lake before the last election: to invest \$12 million over the next two years, matching the support of the federal government, to support a Lake Simcoe action fund to speed up the cleanup of Lake Simcoe; to develop a new governance structure for the lake, working with the stakeholders; to create a Lake Simcoe charter; to increase and streamline funding for water and waste water infrastructure for projects impacting Lake Simcoe and across the province; to end the dumping of primary sewage into our lake; to hire more conservation officers to protect the lake and rebuild the Ministry of Natural Resources so it can better maintain the lake's health; conserve more green space with a land conservation challenge fund in areas like Lake Simcoe; and invest in better GO train service through the Lake Simcoe area to reduce pollution, smog and the impact of climate change, which all threaten the health of the lake.

1540

You will notice that our first point was to provide funds. I'm amazed that this government doesn't seem to understand this. So what is the government proposing to do? Well, it's writing a law to develop a plan. It will require the Ministry of the Environment to file an annual report; it will appoint a hearing officer; it will set up one committee; it will set up a second committee; it will make agencies and municipalities responsible for doing various things. But what will the Ontario government do that will have real effect? The actions that are necessary to take are well known. The conservation authority has told you what they are. Lake Simcoe needs a dedicated revenue stream. Every year that this government fails to provide the appropriate funding, the problem gets worse and worse.

Lake Simcoe needs a provincial government that is willing to provide real leadership. It does not need more studies or plans or bureaucratic reorganization. At one time, the conservation authority only had authority over half the lake, which might seem very surprising, but that is actually the case. It was the PC government that changed the legislation, which put the entire lake under its purview.

The conservation authority over many years coordinated the Lake Simcoe environmental management strategy system. This was a system that allowed the various levels of government to participate in the conservation authority. There were four, and then five, ministries that were involved as well as the regions of York and Durham, the county of Simcoe and the various municipalities.

I think that in this piece of legislation the complexity of all of the municipalities and levels of government have been overlooked, but through the LSEMS program, the

conservation authority was able to research the issues that we are looking at today, and they have been researched for some years. The conservation authority as well as the Ministry of Natural Resources have the expertise and the knowledge to provide the leadership to protect the lake for years. I note that some of the people who have been appointed to this committee that the bill purports to have, in fact, are people with as much as 30 years' experience with the Ministry of Natural Resources, doing exactly that—studying the lake. So I think the point is that we have the expertise. We simply need to ask them. When you receive their advice, you should take action immediately.

An example of the conservation authority is that it has carried out more than 600 remedial projects to lower the phosphorus loads entering into Lake Simcoe, yet when Minister Gerretsen was Minister of Municipal Affairs, he once headed a plan to increase phosphorus levels in the lake. I questioned him in this House two years ago about his ministry's intergovernmental action plan to assist in planning development in Simcoe county. As part of this, the government paid the Lake Simcoe Conservation Authority \$1.5 million to develop the framework that provided advice on development plans and their impact on Lake Simcoe. Despite the conservation authority's advice, the IGAP process recommended a strategy for development that would allow the levels of phosphorus flowing into Lake Simcoe to actually increase, even though the authority said that phosphorus levels in the lake are a problem. The minister would not answer the question with a commitment to halt phosphorus. It was probably not part of a plan or the result of lengthy discussions of a committee, another example of lack of action.

The minister's statements yesterday constantly referred to possible actions. He spoke of his proposed plan and suggested public consultation. In fact, he provided a litany of facts about the importance of the lake, the number of rivers and islands. He told us of all the stakeholders living around or even in the lake. He spoke of stewardship opportunities. I assume that this means other people or groups doing those things that the provincial government should be doing.

Perhaps the McGuinty Liberal government should look upon this lake as its own stewardship opportunity. Instead of widening and deepening the bureaucracy that governs the lake and its people, start taking action. Start printing up big cheques. If you want to come to my riding and get all the credit, I would be happy to see you come.

Since you are determined to move forward with this bill in place of immediate action, I call on the government at this time to hold full public hearings in my riding and the ridings of the other Lake Simcoe watershed members. I want you to come and hear the constituents and all of the advocates who have worked so hard to protect the lake.

There are so many groups around the lake that have come together, that have put in countless, countless hours

to advocate, to promote, to teach people—their neighbours and others in the watershed—of the value of this lake. It would seem to me that in the face of all of their work, it is only appropriate that hearings be held, which would allow them to comment on the proposals that are in this bill.

One of the messages that I certainly take from their work is the sense of urgency that those of us who live around the lake recognize. And so, for you to offer a bill that essentially offers no particular set of actions, other than committees and meetings and things like that—we want to see action. We want to see the kinds of things that the best science has demonstrated would work well in our community. We want you to look at the work that has been done over the last 50 years on the lake. We want you to recognize the kind of world-class science that has been done on this lake and move forward with action. That's really what we were hoping for in this bill.

To call it the Lake Simcoe Protection Act is not demonstrated by the content of this bill. It needs to be accompanied by very aggressive funding and aggressive consultation, looking at all of the competing jurisdictions that exist within this watershed. Even as you yourselves have laid upon this same area so many pieces of legislation—you have the greenbelt, you have the growth plan, you have source water protection, you have nutrient management, and on top of that you have put the Lake Simcoe Protection Act.

This will take a long time to sort out, the jurisdictional issues that accompany any new piece of legislation, and all of that time is time wasted, as things such as the erosion on streams, the question of retrofitting and stormwater management—those are issues that require the cheques today. That's really the issue that I feel the most strongly about, that you need to take action more than this bill appears to suggest. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to make a few comments on the remarks of the member for York-Simcoe, who has some real insights, we would all know, into the challenges facing Lake Simcoe because of course parts of the shoreline, some 100 or so kilometres of the shoreline, are in her riding, which is my understanding, anyways. That's something that was raised yesterday: Significant portions of this lake are in the member's riding.

1550

I think it's very, very important that the government take the time to hear not only the criticisms, but the suggestions and particularly the recommendations around process that the member brings to the table. She raised a number of extremely important issues that I think need to be acknowledged and moved on by the government, particularly the ones that speak to engaging those community activists who have already been involved for so many years in the issues surrounding the decline of Lake Simcoe. We know from yesterday's debate and again from today's debate that there are many engaged citi-

zens' groups that are involved. A couple of them were here in the gallery yesterday when the bill was being introduced. But I think they would very much like—actually, I would go so far as to say it behooves the government to undertake hearings on this bill in the area of Lake Simcoe. I think the member herself, as well as the other members who represent areas close to Lake Simcoe, would easily be able to recommend and suggest an appropriate location for those public hearings to take place in.

It seems to me that with that much interest in engagement—the very fact that the bill exists is very much due to the work of this member as well as the work of the member from Simcoe North, Garfield Dunlop. But really they got that energy, they got that impetus, from their constituents who are so engaged in this fight to reclaim the lake.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It gives me great pleasure to enter this debate. I will be speaking a little more fully later on the subject, but I feel that it's extremely important to clarify our government's position in light of the member for York Simcoe's remarks.

Of course the Lake Simcoe protection plan is being supported by a \$20-million investment that will target protection measures, scientific research and on-farm stewardship activities. This is in addition to the very recent announcement through the Investing in Ontario Act. I know that York region, as an example, received some \$53 million for infrastructure projects. They can use that for capital projects, sewage treatment plants—any type of amelioration that they might consider a priority for them to engage in.

I would also like to remind the member for York Simcoe that the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority has applauded the province of Ontario for its leadership in developing a proposed Lake Simcoe Protection Act. Of course, they have been involved for many, many years. In fact, I remember through the 1990s the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority coming to regional council and requesting grants from us. I would like to ask the member for York-Simcoe, when her government had eight years' opportunity to take action on Lake Simcoe, precisely what financial actions they took during that time.

In terms of community consultation, there has been considerable consultation. I personally attended the consultation on this act on April 23, 2008, in Newmarket. It was extremely well attended. The community activists were there, the people involved in the health of Lake Simcoe for the last 20 years were all there, and they applauded the plan.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm pleased to rise in support of the comments made by my colleague from York-Simcoe, who obviously, by the content of her speech, knows this bill inside and out, the initiatives that are behind it and

the history that had happened before the bill was introduced here in the Ontario Legislature. I think she made some very wise calls. Obviously, when you're moving in this type of direction, we need to make sure that these decisions are based on science: on the environmental science, on the biology of the area, the plants and the animal and fish life in the lake itself. It seems very clear.

Sadly, in its approach, what the McGuinty government has done in these types of initiatives is employ political science instead of environmental science. We all remember the Greenbelt Act, for example, where Dalton McGuinty basically drew lines on a map, coloured it in green and said, "Presto, there is the greenbelt." It was not based on science. We saw as a result of that some farms that were split right in half: half in the greenbelt, half outside of the greenbelt. We saw pristine, sensitive environmental areas that were excluded from the greenbelt, while areas that would never be viable, quality farmland were frozen in communities like Grimsby, inside the greenbelt.

Preposterously, there is even a piece of land in Grimsby that has the services under the ground today. It is already hooked up for water and sewer and for expansion, but the McGuinty government used political science and put that inside the greenbelt, so the taxpayers' investment is completely lost. If they had sat down with Mayor Bentley and the officials of the town of Grimsby, they could have told them where the environmentally sensitive lands were, and the high-quality farmland, and where they were not, and we would have had a better outcome.

My colleague from York-Simcoe raises some similar concerns, that for this to go ahead, it has to be based clearly on science and on extensive local consultation. I do hope my colleagues on the government side will listen to this member's valuable advice.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

M. Gilles Bisson: Je pense que, quand on voit de la législation comme ça qui arrive de par cette Assemblée, cela nous indique des fois que le processus peut marcher. Comme ma collègue la députée M^{me} Horwath a dit, ce projet de loi vient directement des efforts des membres locaux qui ont travaillé longtemps avec leurs communautés pour trouver la réponse à un problème qui est franchement assez sérieux non seulement pour la communauté d'où ils viennent, mais qui est un problème qu'on trouve à travers la province.

Un point que je veux faire c'est qu'on sait que le lac Simcoe était affecté avec des années, parce que le développement qui est arrivé aux environs du lac et même plus loin a affecté la qualité de l'eau dans ce lac. Il y a aussi toute la question de tous les bateaux qui amènent des fois des organismes dans le lac, ce qui possiblement—pas possiblement, on le sait—devient très problématique pour le lac lui-même.

Ce qu'on réalise dans cette législature aujourd'hui, c'est qu'on a besoin de trouver des règles qui font du bon sens, qui font la contrebalance entre le développement et

la nécessité de protéger l'environnement local. Donc, le projet de loi essaie d'aller dans cette direction.

Généralement, je suis d'accord avec le projet de loi. Il y a certains points dont je pense qu'on va avoir besoin de parler un peu plus en détail une fois qu'on arrive au comité, et on va avoir l'opportunité de faire cela dans ce temps-là.

Mais le point que je veux faire, c'est qu'on aura besoin, possiblement, d'avoir un projet de loi qui regarde d'autres lacs et d'autres endroits de la province de l'Ontario qui ont les mêmes problèmes, parce que cela n'existe pas seulement au lac Simcoe; ça existe, par exemple, à Sudbury, le lac qui est directement à Sudbury, et autres où on a les mêmes problématiques. On pourrait possiblement apprendre, à travers ce processus, quelque chose qu'on pourrait mettre en place pour aider à protéger d'autres lacs à travers cette province qui se trouvent en danger avec tout le développement dans leur voisinage.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. I will return to the member for York-Simcoe.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I want to just respond to a couple of the comments that have been made.

I recognize that in the bill the suggestion is there that there would be \$20 million—spread, by the way, over four years. The point is that, because of the nature of this problem, it gets worse and worse in terms of the lake and the pressures of growth, so people are looking for some kind of demonstration that there is a very definite plan and money attached to that to be able to move forward. Certainly, that was the intent of my comments, that that's the kind of thing that is necessary.

I think the other thing that is important to recognize is the complexity of this particular area. It is under significant pressure. It's one of the fastest-growing areas in the province. As I mentioned in my comments, it's also got a very complex area of jurisdiction. So I think the government has to, in its legislation, not only be very clear about a fiscal plan to go along with this piece of legislation, but something that is going to become a very clear direction for the decision-makers at the local level as well, because it's frankly something that the government is injecting itself into.

1600

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my pleasure to rise this afternoon and make a few comments on the record about Bill 99, the Lake Simcoe Protection Act. Some of you will know that my colleague Peter Tabuns, the member for Toronto-Danforth, is our environment critic and he laid out a number of issues in his leadoff speech yesterday. But I think this is an important bill and one that I feel it's necessary to put some remarks on the record about myself. I believe that this is the thin edge of the wedge when it comes to finding ways to protect natural areas that are at risk of huge impacts from climate change. So if we get this bill right, just as it is a stepping

stone from other things that have occurred in the past in this province, we can then replicate the success and use it in other locations around the province.

It's interesting, because unfortunately there are people who have looked at this legislation, people who have been consulted in the process of trying to save this lake for decades now, but there are concerns that are arising that the bill has its challenges in terms of meeting that very high test of actually being able to turn around the direction that Lake Simcoe is going in. That's why I thought it was important to make a few comments, because unfortunately the sense that I'm getting from several people is that instead of this bill being giant steps, big leaps forward, in fact it's pin steps, little baby steps forward. That's really not good enough for a lake that is extremely threatened at this point in time.

I say that because I do believe that if the government takes the time to do the public hearings, and hears back in specifics from people who have been so long engaged in this battle to save Lake Simcoe, it will be able to improve this legislation and expand it from baby steps into giant steps so that we will end up at the end of the process with a bill that will do everything that it purports to do and then can be used as a model in other locations across the province.

It's interesting to know that there have been so many community organizations and groups that have been engaged in the process of raising the issue of the decline of Lake Simcoe with local politicians, with provincial politicians, and that's where we end up, here with this bill. It's pretty much the same thing that happens in most communities on major environmental fights. It's the community people who really see change happening day in and day out. They're the ones who are active, mostly on environmental issues, oftentimes on other issues as well, and they're our canaries who, by calling us or by sending e-mails to us or by going to public meetings, raising the issues, set off the alarm bells. They're the ones who say, "There's a problem here and somebody had better start paying attention." Unfortunately, it sometimes takes quite a long time before we actually pay attention.

In this case, I think it's a classic case where the lake is in serious trouble right now and, had there been some action prior to today—again, this is one of the criticisms of the bill, and it was raised by the member for York-Simcoe, that the bill itself, as it stands, may not even be taking any action, which is problematic.

Nonetheless, if we start listening to these voices in our community, these people who are passionately engaged in environmental issues, much more early on in the process, then we have, first of all, a much better chance of trying to reverse some of these effects. But also, I believe that we can halt any further degradation and end up having to spend a great deal less in terms of the financial cost of cleaning up some of these messes.

I come from a community where we have had significant environmental problems and challenges, but also significant environmental victories. I think only of the

old Lax properties in the north end of Hamilton. It was literally a dump land, and in the early 1990s the government of the day at the time made a huge investment in cleaning up a significant brownfield site, a huge toxic site. They invested in the cleanup and then the city partnered. Now, that whole area is really the jewel of Hamilton in terms of not only environmental reconstitution, if you will, but also in terms of being a beautiful waterfront for the people of Hamilton.

It involved all kinds of things, not only environmental cleanup in terms of the brownfield site itself, but also taking the shoreline, the waterline, taking what used to be a marsh area and regenerating it back to what it used to be in terms of its function in the broader watershed. We took a place in Hamilton that needed so desperately to be rejuvenated, and we did that. The job is not done yet, but we took it back from being a place that was pretty much not functioning as it was supposed to be in terms of the biodiversity in the watershed there, and we've begun to reverse the trend completely.

Why has that been the result? It's been the result because of the numbers of active participants in the project. So yes, the city and the province of the day, but also the Royal Botanical Gardens, the Hamilton regional conservation authority, which by the way has got a big anniversary coming in about a week or so that we'll be celebrating very soon, the Bay Area Restoration Council, Environment Hamilton, the Hamilton Waterfront Trust—there have been a number of organizations that have worked very hard in bringing the bay back to the people in Hamilton.

I know that this kind of work can be very, very rewarding, and I know that it is possible to make huge gains and make an amazing difference in terms of reversing some of the trends that we've watched happen over the years that have eroded the quality of Lake Simcoe.

There are specific pieces of this particular bill that we think need to be strengthened. I'm going to speak to them a little bit, but I think what's important to say is that the bill itself is something that—in principle, everyone here would agree it's important to bring something forward to begin to protect Lake Simcoe. Where we need to really spend some time is on those pieces where there's an identification that either more can be done or things can be done differently to make sure that we're not mired down and we can actually get things happening very quickly and that the bill itself is broad enough that we don't inadvertently pass something thinking, "Oh, phew, we've saved Lake Simcoe. The whole thing's over. Our job's done," only to find out within a year or two that in fact there are pieces there that need to be put in place that were not accomplished in this bill.

Yesterday, when my colleague spoke about the bill, he laid out a number of issues that New Democrats think need to be addressed. A big part of the analysis that he put on the table is that it's not just a matter of the lake itself and its watershed areas. In fact, I think it was the member from Peterborough on the government side who was talking about his own community and how many

pieces of actual watershed even travel eventually into the whole Lake Simcoe area and/or how his own area can possibly be positively affected by doing the right thing in this bill in terms of particularly, hopefully, some of the amendments that we would like to see.

So a big part of the issue that we raised yesterday was around putting policies in that are designated specifically to protect, improve and restore the watershed's key natural features and functions and to ensure that natural forest and wetland cover enhance Lake Simcoe's water quality and watershed's biodiversity. Basically, the idea is that it's not good enough to just deal with the very adjacent areas but that the entire land use planning system in and around the Lake Simcoe area needs to be part of the solution here. It cannot be a narrow focus; it needs to be quite a broad focus.

Another issue that was raised, and that I agree on, is that the policies and the plan itself should be applying not only to the watershed but also to the adjacent areas. My critic did mention specifically the area on the west side of the lake where development pressures appear to be the greatest and also where the watershed is physically the narrowest. It's not possible in anybody's imagination to restore the lake eventually because we have to basically restrict the uses. That's the bottom line. The pressure on the lake is there because of increased development, because of increased runoff, because of increase as a result of phosphorus levels. There are significant people activities that are impacting on the lake, so it's not possible at all to restore the lake without making sure that the entire watershed area is looked at. The plan has to not only be the Lake Simcoe area but the Georgian Bay-Lake Simcoe source protection region also has to be expanded to be that entire piece. The bottom line is that there are multiple impacts from many different sources and we have to identify those and act proactively on all of them if we're truly going to save the lake, if we're truly going to reverse the negative impacts that have happened over the decades.

1610

There's also an interesting kind of concern about definitions and about wording within the bill. The bill distinguishes between two phrases, one being "policies" and the other being "designated policies." There is some concern that designated policies are the policies that are usually conformed to by land use planning processes. So if there's a designated policy, if you're doing a rezoning or if you're doing any kind of land use plan or regional plan, these kinds of plans have to be in step with designated policies. But the bill also speaks to other environmental policies without the word "designated" in front of them that raise some questions around this being a loophole. If it's not a designated policy, if it's simply an environmental policy or simply another kind of policy, then does that mean that developers can use that uncertain language as a loophole to have zoning changes that are not going to be consistent with the idea of protecting Lake Simcoe?

The bill also includes provisions particular to subsection 5(2) that allow policies under this plan to override

municipal standards. For instance, if municipalities have official plans in place, they have zoning bylaws—and within these documents they have existing policies or existing standards that are more restrictive or more challenging in terms of challenging development and not allowing development to go forward or restricting the development significantly—and those land use plans or those zoning bylaws are quite restrictive compared to what happens in this act or what happens in the eventual plan, unfortunately, the way the bill reads, the more restrictive policies are not in force; in fact, it's the plan itself and the act that supersede.

We've seen this problem already in the province of Ontario just recently when this government decided that when they brought in their pesticide bill, instead of respecting the municipalities that have already put in place pesticide legislation and bylaws at the local level, instead of respecting their wishes and allowing them to have a higher standard in those municipalities, where they were leaders in terms of being proactive around the banning of pesticides, this government decided no, it wasn't up to the municipalities to make those decisions. Municipalities would get patted on the head and told, "Even though you've gone further and even though you have a more restrictive regime, we, the province, are going to set a ceiling here whereby you cannot have better or more restrictive or more stringent pesticide bylaws." And that's unfortunate. It's unfortunate in terms of disrespecting municipalities, which is totally contrary to the spin of this government all the time, which says, "Oh, we're full partners with municipalities. We see them as an equal partner going forward in everything we do." And we all just know that's a spin and it's reflected every time they bring forward legislation like pesticide legislation and like this, where it says very clearly that if the municipalities have a stronger standard, if they're going further, then their wisdom and the community participation that they usually have to undertake to get to that piece of wisdom, to get to that bylaw, to get to that zoning bylaw, can all go by the wayside, and that in fact the government of Ontario knows better than what the municipalities know and what the activists know, those who have usually been very active in bringing those policies forward.

That's a significant problem, and I would really expect that the government, when they hear the comments at the public hearings on this bill—I think this is somewhere where they need to rethink. I really do respectfully believe that the government needs to rethink overtaking municipal insight and municipal perspective on these kinds of issues, particularly with the Lake Simcoe act.

As I said earlier, this particular problem wouldn't even be at this table if it wasn't for the decades of activism that have taken place in those communities around Lake Simcoe. Yesterday there was mention many times of the Ladies of the Lake, who have been here as well. I know Garfield Dunlop—I'm just doing a plug for Garfield now—has got his Ladies of the Lake calendars for sale. I think they're 15 bucks a shot, so for anybody here who is

really interested in helping support that organization, which continues to provide insights and continues to do community work with those funds that they raise, that \$15 calendar, I think, is a good investment.

The last thing that I think is important and that I wanted to raise is that there's an issue around activity in the broader area. I guess what that means is, as we continue to identify the Lake Simcoe area as having potential for a higher population load, we have to acknowledge that that higher population load is going to also impact on Lake Simcoe. We need to rethink what we're doing, from the bigger-picture perspective, around loading population around that lake when we know that with the existing population that has grown so significantly over the last several years, we're already in trouble. Continuing to suggest that we have to continue to grow the population around the lake, I think, is really problematic. We need to start going in the opposite direction and really restricting the kinds of activities and the population growth directly around that lake.

The big point is that I think the bill, in terms of its general thrust and its goal or its aim, which is quite clear in its title, the Lake Simcoe Protection Act—I don't have the full title in front of me—is a laudable bill, a laudable goal. I think we can all look forward to having a final version that is completely supportable. I do believe there are improvements that need to be made. I think I've outlined most of those improvements that I would like to see. The issues of municipalities and their ability to have more stringent or more firm development restrictions or bylaws—whether it be the zoning bylaws or other kinds of bylaws—are particularly important.

I think clarifying the language is extremely, extremely important. We don't want to have any loopholes. Language is only one of those kinds of places where we find loopholes, and so making sure that there is no opportunity for developers to do the speculation thing, buying up land around the area—we know what they're like. They'll just put pressure and pressure and pressure, and they'll find any way that they can to tear down the intentions of the government and of all those people who have been involved in the process of protecting Lake Simcoe. We cannot let that happen. It would be an absolute tragedy.

I think there are things we need to do about ensuring that when the government takes this bill into the next phase, which is the committee phase, there is an understood obligation, or at least a commitment, to take that bill out to Lake Simcoe and to have the conversation; after second reading in committee, out at Lake Simcoe, to make it easy and to facilitate the opportunity of those community groups that have been so involved to have a say in what they would like to see in terms of possible amendments and improvements to the bill.

1620

So, yes, this is a good direction. It is what I would characterize as a baby step. We have the opportunity, the government has the opportunity, to expand that into a giant step, a giant leap forward in terms of protecting the

lake or in terms of actually reversing the degradation of the lake and making the ecosystem there and the watershed pristine.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate and to follow the member from Hamilton Centre. I listened carefully to some of her comments. Some I'd agree with; some, I think, were a little overly harsh.

This process has the hallmark of potentially being one of those pieces of legislation where everybody plays their part in a proper way, and that is that the citizens have been actively engaged in the general area around the watershed. I think it's been a political issue that's drawn people's interest in a non-partisan way. I think the government has responded to that in a co-operative way. Most, if not all, of the comments I've heard from the opposition to date have been fairly constructive, and I think it's an attempt to make the bill even better.

So it's got all the hallmarks of a process that people like to see out of their government. The previous speaker talked about some experiences down in Hamilton. Cootes Paradise is an area that I know she'll be quite familiar with. Sometimes the environment surprises you. I was on the board of directors for the Royal Botanical Gardens when it was decided that we were going to restore Cootes Paradise. The scientists said it would take a very, very long time, and with a little bit of care and doing all the right things, we were able to bring that area back in a very, very short period of time.

I'm hoping to see the same thing happen with Lake Simcoe, and that's why I'm anxious that this process move forward. We need to get it to the committee stage; we obviously need to get public input on it from people. It's a process that I think has been really typified by asking people in the general area just what they think and trying to incorporate that into the legislation to the highest degree possible.

The funding is in place. We've announced \$850,000 already for early actions for that. Half a million of those dollars flowed to the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority. We've also got a pilot project going, on Phoslock, which removes phosphorus, and \$100,000 went to local environmental groups. So the funding is in place; everybody is—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: The member from Hamilton Centre gave a good talk there, a very practical presentation on issues environmental.

And to be practical, we do have to talk about money and funding for some of the good plans that we have been hearing about during this debate. We had an indication, by the parliamentary assistant, of a bit of money coming forward or having been spent, but we have to know, with respect to these good plans that are on the docket here, how will they'll be resourced, how we go beyond the planning stage or layering plans on top of plans, and how we go beyond just another pile of red tape and confusion and more forms to fill out.

We know that a number of volunteer groups have done an excellent job of raising money: We think of that famous calendar put out by the Ladies of the Lake. We do know that last February, the federal government pledged \$18 million dedicated to what's called a Lake Simcoe cleanup fund. Julia Munro and Garfield Dunlop know this program and have worked with the members on this program, and it's a program at this point that has identified \$30 million over five years dedicated to a federal Lake Simcoe cleanup fund to deal with phosphorus loading, to rehabilitate fish and wildlife habitat, to address the issue of sewage control, sewer overflows, storm water overflows. And much of that money, I'm sure, would be leveraged through municipal funding as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I too want to thank the member from Hamilton Centre for her very thoughtful comments about Bill 99. I rise today as well to speak in support of Bill 99. I really wanted to take this opportunity to speak about this bill and how important it is not only to the citizens surrounding Lake Simcoe but to all of the province of Ontario. Bordering Lake Huron, you really have a sense of how important water quality is, and not only in the environmental sense but also in the financial impact when we look at how much we rely on the water to attract not only the fish and the natural wildlife but also the people coming to the area. Certainly we understand how delicate a balance it can often be.

When we work with our citizens, as it is being proposed in Bill 99, this can only make their community stronger. The McGuinty government has, time after time, brought forward good public policy that in fact strengthens our communities, and this is clearly demonstrated by Bill 99. I have not had the opportunity to see the Ladies of the Lake calendar, but I look forward to that. I know how many of my constituents volunteer a great deal of their time in order to ensure that Lake Huron remains strong.

I want to congratulate all the volunteers that work on making sure that Lake Simcoe will be restored to its natural heritage, and I congratulate all the volunteers. It takes so many, and it is a lifelong work. So I want to thank the member from Hamilton Centre.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question and comment. I recognize the member for Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to participate in this debate and make comment on what has been said already. I look forward to having more to say about Bill 99, an important piece of legislation if in fact the government does support it and, as my colleague Ms. Munroe said earlier in the debate, actually comes to the table with financial support to do the things that the preamble of the bill states it wants to accomplish.

No one in this House—in fact, I don't know of anyone who would disagree with the stated intent of this legislation. What we will be watching very carefully, how-

ever, is whether or not this is yet more smokescreen for the government on the one hand to appear to be appeasing those who have environmental objectives and yet, on the other hand, to really do nothing. It seems that what we have here is really a plan to do some more planning, and that's not what we need. If the government is serious about the environment, about Lake Simcoe and the health of Lake Simcoe, then what the government will do is identify very quickly some specific projects which can be undertaken that will immediately affect the health of that lake and of the surrounding environment. That takes a financial commitment. It's easy for us to spend hours in this place debating what can or should be done. It's up to the government to show action by putting the financial resources to get the job done. I'll have much more to say about that in my comments further along the way.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. The member for Hamilton Centre has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I appreciate the comments of the members from Oakville, from Haldimand-Norfolk, from Huron-Bruce and from Newmarket-Aurora.

I thank the member from Oakville for mentioning Cootes Paradise, because in my head I kept thinking, "Princess Point," and I couldn't get Cootes Paradise out, so I appreciate that. Of course you know that project well, and it has been an extremely important success, a piece in the whole waterfront reconstitution in Hamilton which has been fabulous.

The member from Haldimand-Norfolk as well as the member for Newmarket-Aurora I think bring some urgency to the issue that is important. I appreciate their comments because I believe that it's been raised a number of times through the discussion that the time for action really is now. In fact, the time for action was probably years ago, not now. So while being careful to involve the community and make sure that we're in step with community activists and then the people who have owned the Lake Simcoe restoration issue for such a long time, we need to find proactive ways to make a significant difference, and to make it quickly.

1630

I also want to thank the member for Huron-Bruce, particularly for her comments around environmental activists in all communities and taking the issue of what's happening in Lake Simcoe and relating it to her own community around Lake Huron. I think she raises the important issue of what these bodies of water mean, not only to people who are living around that area or vacationing around that area, but just from the broader perspective of what they mean to all of the people of Ontario in terms of being an important part of our natural heritage as a province. That's extremely important as well.

The member from Oakville, I think, said that I was being a bit harsh, but really, sometimes you have to take a hard look at these things, look them right in the face and decide that they need to be improved. It's with that

courage of conviction that things actually change. Hopefully, we'll see the few changes that we need to make this bill as strong as it can be.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm very pleased to rise in support of Bill 99, an act to restore the ecological health of the Lake Simcoe watershed. Over 350,000 people live in the Lake Simcoe watershed, many in northern York region and many in my riding of Oak Ridges-Markham. Lake Simcoe is extremely important to us. It provides clean drinking water for eight communities and it assimilates waste from some 15 sewage treatment plants. It encompasses some 23 municipalities. Agricultural production in the Lake Simcoe watershed generated close to \$300 million in 2006, and it is the largest lake in southern Ontario outside of the Great Lakes. As most of us in York region know, it is also the ice-fishing capital of North America.

It is, as many members have commented this afternoon, also a high-growth area of the province. According to Statistics Canada, the population in the watershed's municipalities grew by over 57,000 people between 2001 and 2006. Though the highest proportion of this growth was in Barrie, many of the other municipalities in northern York region also accounted for a large part of this growth.

Obviously, population growth places extra pressure on water supplies and land resources. New housing reduces forest cover and wildlife habitat. According to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the population of the Lake Simcoe watershed is expected to increase from 350,000 to more than 750,000 by the year 2031.

How did the lake get to its current state and why is it so stressed? It has been years of inaction by the previous provincial governments, most notably of course during the time of the late 1990s and the early part of this century when the Harris and then the Eves governments had every opportunity to do what we are doing now.

We've known about the problem since the early 1990s. As the medical officer of health for York region, I was regularly closing beaches along the southern shore of Lake Simcoe. We were well aware that we had high phosphorus loads. I'm sure most members in this House realize that phosphorus is one of the major problems related to ecosystem health. Too much of it causes plants in the lake to grow excessively, and when these plants eventually decay they use up a lot of the water's oxygen, leaving the lake's fish with less and less of the oxygen they need. The lake has had to be restocked since the lake no longer can support a naturally breeding cold-water fishery. Of course, phosphorus comes from septic tile beds, storm sewers, urban and agricultural runoff and even airborne particles.

We've also had a major issue with invasive species. Some of these examples that have been transported into Lake Simcoe are the rusty crayfish, the round goby and the zebra mussel. These invasive species disrupt the natural balance of the ecosystem. Climate change has

also influenced the state of Lake Simcoe. In fact, in 2001, the Canadian Ice Fishing Championships had to be cancelled.

I think it's important to acknowledge the very good work of the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority. They have been trying, in somewhat of a piecemeal fashion, as the member for York-Simcoe has alluded to, over the last 15 years to improve the health of the lake. In fact, since the 1990s, when there were some 100 tonnes of phosphorus that entered Lake Simcoe each year, the efforts of the conservation authority and municipalities have seen those levels drop to 67 tonnes by 2004.

However, this is clearly not enough, and this is the time for a comprehensive plan to improve the ecological health of Lake Simcoe. I'm so pleased to see that in fact the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority has applauded the province of Ontario for its leadership in developing a proposed Lake Simcoe Protection Act. Of course, the staff of the LSRCA has been actively engaged in this process to date. They've attended public consultation opportunities, they've submitted comments on the discussion paper and they've co-chaired the provincial stakeholder advisory committee. They have provided provincial staff with all their scientific reports, documents and programs regarding their watershed-based protection and restoration programs—in fact, throughout their 55-year history. This is the kind of partnership that we think will be extremely valuable as we move forward.

But it is clear that there is now a need for provincial legislation. Lake Simcoe deserves provincial protection. Ontario is taking a major step to address the effects of more than 200 years of human activity that have had effects on Lake Simcoe's water quality and ecosystem. Legislation introduced would, if passed by the Legislature, require the province to develop a comprehensive plan to restore the lake's watershed and address the issue of phosphorus discharge, invasive species and challenges related to climate change. We're going to do this on a science-based approach, so that we ensure that development and activities around the lake are environmentally sustainable. And of course, we are committing \$20 million in an investment to target protection measures, scientific research and on-farm stewardship activities.

This type of scientific approach includes developing indicators, monitoring, evaluating and communicating to the community the results of the progress that will be made. The LSRCA, the province of Ontario and Environment Canada operate monitoring sites and stations throughout the watershed where information is gathered to monitor its health. These monitoring stations measure precipitation, weather, temperature, quality and quantity of groundwater, quality and quantity of surface water, the fish in the lakes and tributaries that flow into Lake Simcoe, the organisms that live at the bottom of the lake and its tributaries, and the land characteristics, including forested areas, hardened surfaces and streamside areas. This information is gathered through 12 precipitation and climate gauges throughout the watershed; 12 flow-monitoring stations; groundwater monitoring of 14 wells

at 11 sites; thermometers and waterways throughout the watershed; site visits; an advanced land classification system; seasonal inventories of fish and other aquatic life forms; 18 water quality stations within the tributaries; and 12 water quality monitoring stations on the lake. This shows the comprehensive and scientific nature of what we are attempting to do.

There has been considerable public consultation to date. I did attend the consultation on April 23, 2008, along with Minister Gerretsen and his parliamentary assistant, Kevin Flynn. This was an exceptionally well-attended and lively consultation session. Numerous views were brought to the table, and as this process continues with public hearings, no doubt we will hear some more good advice from the communities that know the lake the best. There was another consultation in Barrie, and the Chippewas of Georgina Island have been also been consulted.

1640

A particularly welcome endorsement came from Annabel Slaight, who in fact is co-founder of the Ladies of the Lake, of calendar fame, and what Annabel had to say was that Bill 99 is "another great step forward, particularly because it envisions residents of the watershed and government working hand in hand"—A full appreciation of our approach.

So, as we move forward with our plan, I'm confident that the residents in my riding, the people of northern York region, will see measurable improvements to the quality of the lake. Over the next few years, I hope that we will be able to return it to that type of pristine state that the first Europeans saw back in the 17th century. The Huron natives called their lake "Ouentironk," which means "beautiful water." We all feel it's beautiful now, but now we know that it can be even improved as we move forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? Are there any questions and comments?

Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I heard some comments earlier about the canary in the coal mine. Of course, that was a popular adage reflecting back to the industrial age in the coal mines and what would happen with pollution. I don't believe we have too many canaries or coal mines in Ontario today, but I think what's clear is that we do have carp in the creek instead of canaries in the coal mine.

This piece of legislation is so similar to the gristmill that continually reams out more and more legislation from the other side. There are always many ways to address a problem and to solve a problem. An incentive-based approach is one way. My colleague from York-Simcoe was talking earlier about funds to address specific projects and clean up the carp in the creek. That's an incentive-based approach. Or you can have a punitive approach, and without fail and without doubt, the Liberal government today in Ontario believes in a punitive approach. They always default to a punitive method instead of this incentive-based approach.

I'd just like to make further mention—other people have mentioned it today and yesterday—about how the

federal government has come to the table, has stepped up to the plate about Lake Simcoe. They didn't spend days, weeks or months debating or crafting up legislation. They targeted \$30 million to cleanup projects. They didn't pass any new legislation; they used existing legislation to address the problem.

I think what that demonstrates to all of us is the real commitment of different governments to address a problem. Here we saw, on the federal side, action. What we see on the provincial side with this is more of the same, as my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora said, “smoke-screens.” I think in this case it's more of a silkscreen that we're getting. Just look at the burden, the silting in of legislation, the greenbelt, the Oak Ridges moraine, the Clean Water Act, the water resources act—on and on—the Nutrient Management Act. More and more legislation gets built up and built up, but with not even a plan. They haven't got the plan yet. We have 10 different pieces of legislation with hundreds of pages of regulations in each but no plan and no targeted investments.

When I heard the member from Oak Ridges earlier talk about the \$20-million investment, I was reminded very much of the investment that the Liberal government announced with their greenbelt legislation. Of course, the bulk of that went out to radio advertising to say how great the greenbelt plan was, but there was no targeted investment.

I think we have to look at what the consequences are of this piling on of legislation, one after the other after the other. Who is going to be able and how much money is it going to cost just to learn, just to understand the legislation that you have to go through to do anything in the Lake Simcoe area now? Whether you want to put a little addition on your house or put a barn up for your animals, you'll have to go through all these pieces of legislation, and you're not even going to know which one applies until you get to them all to find out which one is most restrictive, and you're still going to have to find somebody who will make a decision about which one applies.

This Liberal government is very adept, very skilful at creating red tape, at creating regulations. But what the people of Ontario want and what the people of Ontario expect is action and results, not just more smokecreens. This government is creating burdens, creating false expectations, and they are deceiving the people of Ontario with this sort of legislation. It's—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the member to be careful with the language he's using and to withdraw that unparliamentary remark.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'll withdraw that. But so often, we see the same wording and same phrases, the same methodology in these pieces of legislation. We see the exact phrases and the exact same consequences people talked about in the protection of Lake Simcoe.

I would like to read just a couple of things in this piece of legislation. First off, we're going to hire another significant number of inspectors, and these inspectors will be able to have greater powers than our police services.

They have the power of warrantless entry into your properties for a host of indications. Is warrantless entry going to protect the fish in Lake Simcoe? Is it going to protect the water quality that I've heard talked about? These are the same methods that were employed with the Clean Water Act and a number of others.

But there's also this belief from the McGuinty Liberal government that private individuals ought to carry the full expense and burden of government policy, that the government doesn't need to protect the environment; they'll put the burden on private individuals. I'd like to just refer again to the legislation itself. On page 19, it says, “No costs, compensation or damages are owing or payable to any person and no remedy, including but not limited to a remedy in contract, restitution, tort or trust, is available to any person in connection with anything referred to” in this legislation.

Changing policies, changing the rules of the game and then restricting, preventing, refusing remedy: This is not acceptable. The role of government is not to place hardships and burdens on individuals in advancement of public policy. This is again the punitive approach of the Liberal government—punitive, and a hammer. Every problem is a nail, and they wield the sledgehammer for those nails.

1650

I ask the Liberal government to be thoughtful. Let's think about incentive-based environmental legislation that will fund targeted projects, that will clean up our environment, clean up our lakes, but not cause hardship and injustice to the people of this province.

I think everybody would recognize it is not an individual who is to pay for this Liberal policy. It should be all people, not just one, and not fixing this problem in Lake Simcoe by buying some more radio advertising like they did with the greenbelt legislation. Let's clarify, let's streamline, let's remove these pieces of overlapping legislation. Let's get to the meat of the matter and let's start fixing the problems, not just trapping our residents in these nets of legislation that the Liberals are so adept at creating. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'm certainly pleased to respond to the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

In this day and age, you can't pick up a paper without reading concerns about food security, food safety, and environmental concerns. For a member to stand up in this House and talk about inspectors in the disparaging comments that were made—quite frankly, I'm surprised. And when we hear comments made about no consultation, you know, “Just go in and do it,” quite frankly, we've seen that; we've lived through it. I just would remind the member that you don't have to look very far, even in the province of Ontario, to go back to that time, and there are still communities that are suffering through decisions that were made at that time, when we just went in and got it done and we weren't respectful of the needs

and the reasons we come forward with a regulatory framework in respect of that.

Quite frankly, I just could not let the comments go unnoticed. I really think that for this member to stand up and not be supportive of a piece of legislation that clearly—and if he is, then, my goodness, his comments are certainly not going to be reflected in how he will vote. I have certainly heard nothing here today that would lead me to believe that this member is going to be in support of this legislation that is community-driven and is action that they want to see taken today. So I think it's very unfortunate that we are not listening to the communities and acting on what direction the communities want to see today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to add my comments today to the members for York–Simcoe, Huron–Bruce, Oak Ridges–Markham and, of course, the final summation from the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington. I don't think I heard in his remarks anywhere that he wasn't supporting the legislation. What he was doing was drawing attention to a number of the shortfalls and the overregulation. I think he'll speak to that when he does rise, but I don't think I heard him anywhere say that he didn't support it, because I know the members on this side of the House do support it. What he was pointing out was the overregulation.

We hear this every day. I conducted a number of interviews over the last couple of weeks, and when we have small business people come in, they talk about overregulation, about how government bills and so on are affecting their small businesses, and this is another example of that. But in principle, we support Bill 99, and what we're doing is trying to point out the impact of overregulation and regulations when well-thought-out and well-meaning people bring forth legislation that can impact individuals. I live on Lake Huron as well; I share some of the lake with the member from Huron–Bruce, and also the St. Clair River. At the end of the day, we all want to have clean water and clean rivers and we want to have a habitat that our friends and family can enjoy for generations to come. I think what we need to do is always be cognizant of what overregulation can do if there's no recourse, like the member said—where something is overregulated and is a cost to the individual.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further questions and comments? I'll return to the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Just to clarify, I am fully supportive of not only protecting our environment, but also improving it. As I mentioned, there are many ways of fixing a problem: the incentive-based or the punitive-based. I thought that was pretty clear in my comments, but just for clarification, that's reiterated now. This piece of legislation relies heavily on the punitive aspect and nothing on the incentive-based aspect.

The member spoke about inspectors. We can hire more and more inspectors or we can target an investment

to actually do things. What's clear to me, and I think to most people, is that the Liberal government would like to hire more and more inspectors, and I think what's clearly happening is that we have a chief inspector over there whose name is Mr. Clouseau and they're going to hire more and more inspectors without bothering to solve the problem.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I have an agreement between both the government and the opposition to move the following unanimous consent motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Timmins–James Bay is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion. Does the House consent? Agreed? Agreed.

Member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I seek unanimous consent that, notwithstanding standing order 97(c), the following changes be made to the ballot list for private members' business: That Madame Gélinas and Mr. Kormos exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Kormos assumes ballot item 38 and Madame Gélinas assumes ballot 58; and that, notwithstanding standing order 97(g), notice be waived for ballot item 38.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Bisson has made a motion with respect to private members' business. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: I would like to put some issues on the record concerning Bill 99 and, on behalf of my constituents, challenge the government to put some traction to this legislation, so that it not become yet one more in a series of announcements that this government makes, leaving the perception of action and, in the trail of the legislation, leaving a great deal undone and yet one more broken promise along the way.

I want to start off by stating very clearly that I believe the government has created a serious problem for itself here and I look forward to finding out how the government is going to unravel the confusion that it's creating through the introduction and passage of Bill 99.

Section 1 of Bill 99 states as its purpose the following: "The purpose of this act is to protect and restore the ecological health of the Lake Simcoe watershed." No one is going to argue with that purpose. We all support the objective.

1700

But it's interesting that we have another act in this province called the Conservation Authorities Act. Section 20 of the Conservation Authorities Act, which was passed many years ago, states the following, "The Conservation Authorities Act provides for the object of the authority which is 'to establish and undertake in the area over which it has jurisdiction a program designed to further conservation, restoration, development and management of natural resources other than gas, oil and minerals.'"

Section 21 of the act permits the authority to complete many activities to accomplish its objects including—and again I quote from the act—“study and investigate the watershed, and to determine a program whereby the natural resources of the watershed may be conserved, restored, developed and managed.”

Now, the challenge the government is going to have is that they have two pieces of legislation that overlap. We have the conservation authority, in this particular case the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority, that has been empowered through the Conservation Authorities Act to in fact undertake the very objective that is set out in this new act, Bill 99, to do exactly the same, although Bill 99, interestingly enough, does not empower any particular agency to actually do the work. So the first order of responsibility that this government has is to clarify for the conservation authority where they fit in, and the conservation authority would be first in line to ask that question. I'm asking it on their behalf in the course of this debate.

I want to give credit to the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority for the good work that they have done over the years. I find it interesting that the member for Oak Ridges–Markham in her previous remarks went out of her way to talk about how Lake Simcoe had been so neglected over the previous years and of course, as usual, could not resist pointing the finger at the Mike Harris government—of which, by the way, I'm proud to have been a part. So, on the one hand, the member for Oak Ridges–Markham said that nothing had been done for Lake Simcoe, that had it not been for the McGuinty government that somehow this lake would be in serious trouble. She, as the medical officer of health, had to constantly close down beaches and so on and so forth. But in the next breath—and Hansard will show—the member, to her credit, commended the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority for the successes of bringing back the health of Lake Simcoe.

The reason that there is measurable improvement in the health of Lake Simcoe is not because of action taken with a few months. This takes years to develop, and I'll tell you what happened. The reason is that the previous government provided the funding, the support and the resources to put in place those programs through the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority and under their good management, so that there is the kind of improvement that we have today in Lake Simcoe.

Much needs to be done; there is no question. That's why I will be at the front of the line to say, we will support—I will support on behalf of my constituents—any measure that's going to take us the distance to ensure that not only Lake Simcoe but the entire watershed becomes resilient and that we have a responsibility, yes, as a Legislature, but the broader community, for its stewardship, and that is ultimately the objective.

But not only is there a conflict in terms of the Conservation Authorities Act and this proposed Lake Simcoe Protection Act of 2008; there are some other pieces of legislation that also come into conflict, and somehow the

government is going to have some difficulty. I will watch with great interest to see how the government is going to again deal with the overlapping responsibilities of several pieces of legislation that include, for example, the Oak Ridges Moraine Act, the greenbelt, the Places to Grow Act, and that also involve a plan, a growth plan, brought down by this government. It imposed a growth plan for the Golden Horseshoe and that plan, interestingly enough, a decree by the provincial government, imposes some pretty significant growth on the very region that we're discussing today.

It's also interesting that now what we have is a conflict—a tug of war, if I can put that it way—between the Ministry of the Environment, that will have the responsibility for overseeing this Lake Simcoe Protection Act, and another ministry, called the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal, that has a responsibility for overseeing and managing the growth aspect of this government's legislation. How to deal with that is going to be up to the two ministers.

By the way, interestingly enough, I feel for Minister Gerretsen, who, in his previous life as a minister, was responsible for developing the growth targets and the growth objectives and had to do battle, if you will, with municipalities to say, “Oh, by the way, we know that when we were running for election, we said we're going to not impose or download responsibilities on municipalities, and we want municipalities to have their independence and have their say and participate in developing these programs. But as the minister now, I'm telling you that the province will tell you how much growth will take place within your municipalities” and, in this case, within the watershed. And in fact, he told them where it's going to take place.

Now that same minister is the Minister of the Environment, and he now brings forward this bill, which says to the general public—this is what the public is hearing. And by the way, that is what the new minister, in the new clothing of the environment minister, wants the public to perceive: that he is now the champion to hold off growth, to keep everything green and to make sure that all people hear are birds chirping. Yet he's the very minister who imposed the growth targets. It'll be interesting. It'll be interesting to see how now this new minister, reincarnated into the environment minister, is going to do battle with the new superminister, Mr. Smitherman, who now, as the minister responsible for public infrastructure renewal, finds himself on the other side of the coin. We'll be watching very carefully.

I want to make it very clear: As I said at the outset, I fully support the objective of this bill. Our responsibility as legislators, however, is to cut through the façade and to cut through what perhaps is a perception and help the public understand what is actually going on here.

1710

You and I know that when this bill was announced, the Lake Simcoe Protection Act, the perception on the part of the onlookers was that this government was now taking a strong stand against growth and that all would be

well on the environment side. The reality is that a closer review of this bill shows that there is no depth whatsoever. There is no clarity to a plan—there is no plan. At best, this is a plan to plan and at worst, it's a plan for confusion because the stakeholders, be they the conservation authority, be they the municipalities, be they the regions involved and affected by this plan, have no idea what their role is going to be. I predict that it will be years before there is any unravelling here at all, and perhaps that's the plan of the government. Perhaps what the government is really trying to do here is to do nothing, to be seen as doing something, to spend as little as possible and hopefully, people will go away and not bother them with this.

But fortunately we do have stakeholders who for many years have been actually doing the work of bringing Lake Simcoe back to life, who take their work seriously, who have been implementing programs and conservation programs, who have been forming partnerships through municipalities and regions and who have been forming partnerships with the private sector, who have made major contributions through the Lake Simcoe Conservation Foundation, where there are projects along the entire shoreline that are doing their part to bring Lake Simcoe back to life.

I have serious concern that this government has no intention whatsoever of getting serious about these projects, about putting in place practical projects that will have their impact in the short term.

The member from Oak Ridges makes reference to a \$20-million commitment. Anyone in the province of Ontario who hears the announcements by this government, be they for \$20 million, be they for \$30 billion, knows full well that those announcements mean nothing because what we don't see is the cash. We see the promises; we see a great deal of money actually spent on public relations, on advertising; we see a lot of effort being put into communication, but we see very little by way of substantive projects that actually improve the quality of life for people in this province.

What I believe, however, the government may not be bargaining on is that there are some very astute people who are watching what is happening with this legislation, who have expectations and who will be holding the government to account, and we'll be there with them. We won't let the government get away with yet one more dog-and-pony show, we won't accept spin over substance, which is really the track record of this government, and we won't allow them to smokescreen on this issue. We will hold them accountable, and what we expect is that the stakeholders in this watershed will be treated with respect by this government, that they will take the time to sit down with the conservation authority, with the municipalities and with the regions and work through the details of who does what, who will be responsible for what.

I want to close by saying this: A great deal of work, as I said before, has been done by the conservation authority. That work has to be incorporated into this plan. If in fact we're going to move on with a new piece of legislation, we cannot lose the good work that's already been done by the conservation authority. We have the expertise; we have the professionals who understand this watershed and who know what has to be done. We call on the government to work with the conservation authority, to build on their work, and to empower them to carry on their responsibilities as they were empowered to do by the Conservation Authorities Act.

Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to add my comments to this debate. I look forward to hearing from the minister. In fact, I look forward to hearing from both ministers—Minister Smitherman with regard to the public infrastructure renewal aspect and the growth objectives and the growth challenges that this region has, and Minister Gerretsen as the environment minister. I'm very interested to see how they intend to balance what, on the surface and in reality, are really diametrically opposed pieces of legislation. I wish them well. It will be interesting to watch.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments? Further debate? Are there any other members who would like to participate in this debate?

Mr. Gerretsen has moved second reading of Bill 99, An Act to protect and restore the ecological health of the Lake Simcoe watershed and to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act in respect of water quality trading.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. The motion is carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): To which committee shall the bill be referred? I recognize the member for Oakville.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

Orders of the day. I recognize the Minister of Northern Development.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1718.

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Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

First Session, 39th Parliament



Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 24 September 2008

Mercredi 24 septembre 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Greffière
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 24 September 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 24 septembre 2008

*The House met at 0900.
Prayers.*

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SERVICES AND SUPPORTS TO PROMOTE THE SOCIAL INCLUSION OF PERSONS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LES SERVICES ET SOUTIENS FAVORISANT L'INCLUSION SOCIALE DES PERSONNES AYANT UNE DÉFICIENCE INTELLECTUELLE

Mrs. Meilleur moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 77, An Act to provide services to persons with developmental disabilities, to repeal the Developmental Services Act and to amend certain other statutes / *Projet de loi 77, Loi visant à prévoir des services pour les personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle, à abroger la Loi sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle et à modifier d'autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate? Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Please note that I will be sharing my time today with my parliamentary assistant, the MPP for London—Fanshawe.

I rise in the House today in support of our government's proposed legislation to be called the Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008.

Je prends la parole aujourd'hui afin d'appuyer le projet de loi 77 proposé par mon gouvernement, que nous appellerons dorénavant Loi de 2008 sur les services et soutiens favorisant l'inclusion sociale des personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle.

You may notice that the title of this bill has changed since I introduced it last May.

À l'origine, ce projet de loi s'appelait la Loi de 2008 sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle.

Bill 77 was originally called the Services for Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, but families and partners felt that this title didn't capture the true spirit of this new legislation. We listened, and we agreed. Because

at its heart, this bill is about more than services. It is about people; it is about inclusion; it is about creating an Ontario where all people feel that they truly belong.

Le soutien et les services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle ne sont pas une fin en soi. Ce sont plutôt et surtout des moyens pour inclure ces personnes dans tous les aspects de la vie et de la collectivité.

Developmental services and supports are not an end but a means—a means to include people with developmental disabilities in all aspects of community life. This is what our legislation will promote: social inclusion. I ask that the members of this Legislature consider how important it is to be included in society. As public representatives, we make careers out of participating in society and contributing to our communities. Most of us take inclusion for granted, but for people with a developmental disability, few things could be more precious. That's why our government believes that the time has come for people with a developmental disability to take their rightful place in Ontario's communities.

La loi que nous proposons aidera les personnes qui ont une déficience intellectuelle à vivre de façon autonome, à s'intégrer dans la vie de leur collectivité et à y participer pleinement.

Our proposed legislation will help people live more independently, participate more fully and be truly included in the community. It represents years of work, dedication and unprecedented co-operation among ministry staff, developmental services partners and families. I want to thank them today, especially all those who have participated so diligently to make this bill what it is today. I want to thank my staff Laura and Paulo; I want to thank Colette Kent from the ministry, and all her team; and all our partner agencies in the collectivity; and especially the families, who were very firm and very clear on what they wanted. For those of you who are here today, thank you.

More important, it represents a new beginning for people with a developmental disability in Ontario. Our current legislation came from a time when people with a developmental disability were placed in institutions away from the community. The walls of these vast institutions promised families safety and seclusion. Today, the writing is on these walls. We do not want seclusion; we demand inclusion. We do not hide our differences; we celebrate them. We don't believe disability means inability; we know it means other ability.

Distinguished geneticist Dr. Blumberg, who himself was blind in one eye, put it beautifully. He said, "It is just a mistake to think of people with a disability as lesser

than. There is no lesser than. There is just different from. It isn't just great minds that matter. It's great spirits too."

As Minister of Community and Social Services, I have been privileged to meet many people with developmental disabilities. I have been moved by their courage, their playfulness, their humility and their grace. I can tell you that their spirits have affected me more than the most persuasive arguments of eloquent words.

À titre de ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, j'ai eu le privilège de rencontrer plusieurs personnes qui ont un handicap intellectuel. Leur courage, leur humilité, leur sens de l'humour et leur charme m'ont beaucoup touchée. Je puis vous dire aussi que leur grandeur d'âme m'a marquée plus que n'importe quel argument et rhétorique.

0910

Ontario needs new legislation that honours the spirit of people with developmental disabilities; legislation that promotes their inclusion in society; legislation that gives them and their families control over their services and support; legislation that values them as individuals with distinct needs.

We've designed Bill 77 to do this. It reflects how we live today, in rich, diverse communities. We cannot build a new developmental services system on a crumbling foundation. Bill 77 is solid legislation for today and for tomorrow.

Le projet de Loi de 2008 sur les services et soutiens favorisant l'inclusion sociale des personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle est une loi sûre et solide qui reflète nos besoins maintenant et pour l'avenir.

Already we have begun the groundwork to build a modern system, one that reflects our modern society. We have been developing a comprehensive plan for the future, one that leads us for the next 25 years and beyond. We are on track to closing Ontario's three remaining facilities for people with developmental disabilities by the end of March 2009. Closing Ontario's developmental service institutions is about giving people more opportunity to enjoy community life. We have put people, all people, first. We have been working with staff from our government facilities to place them in community jobs and help them to take the next step in their service career. We have collaborated with individuals, families and partners to give people with a developmental disability living arrangements tailored to their needs. It has not been easy. Families are worried about what this change could mean for their loved ones. But I am happy to say that families, even those initially against the change, have now told us that it was the right thing to do. Working side by side, we have helped more than 800 people move into communities across Ontario.

Je suis très heureuse de confirmer que les familles, même celles qui au début du processus de désinstitutionnalisation avaient des réticences, nous disent maintenant que c'était la bonne chose à faire. Nous avons réussi à aider plus de 800 personnes à quitter les établissements gouvernementaux et à s'établir dans des résidences dans la collectivité.

At a meeting with one of our partners, I shared a wonderful story about one man's experience in his new home. Let me share it with you today. After leaving Huronia Regional Centre, this gentleman moved to a Mississauga community. He is now a neighbourhood celebrity. When he attended a recent Community Living Mississauga meeting, he brought an entourage of his 30 new friends, including his bank teller, and the owner of a horseback riding stable where he now rides. This exceptional man's neighbours were there to share his success. Because as he grows, learns new things and makes new friends, his neighbours do too. The whole community is richer for his presence.

We want all Ontarians living with a developmental disability to enjoy this acceptance and make this kind of an impact. Ontario's developmental services system has more than 40,000 people like this gentleman, with a \$1.5-billion budget. Families and developmental service partners have told us they want a better system that is more flexible, fair and focused on people, not bureaucracy. We've listened.

Following a thorough clause-by-clause review, Bill 77 will create a consistent application process in each region of the province, make person-directed planning a ministry-funded service and require that all draft regulations be posted for families and partners to review.

This legislation demonstrates our commitment to partners, families and, most importantly, to people with a developmental disability. This is as it should be, because at its core this bill is about including people—all people—in the life of our province.

We are asking the members of this House to help us take this next step, to do their part to create an Ontario where everyone truly belongs. Together we have come far, and together we will go even further.

Franklin Roosevelt, the four-time American president who lived with a disability, once said, "The only limit to our realization of tomorrow will be our doubts of today. Let us move forward with a strong and active faith." This government has no doubt in people with a developmental disability, so let us move forward together with faith in a brighter tomorrow. Let us realize an Ontario that includes great minds and great spirits.

Notre gouvernement a confiance dans ses citoyens, peu importe leurs difficultés et leurs handicaps. Il nous incombe de faire de notre province un lieu inclusif où il fait bon vivre, maintenant et dans l'avenir.

I encourage all members of the House to support this legislation.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm honoured to rise in this House today, on behalf of our government, for third reading of Bill 77, An Act to provide services to persons with developmental disabilities, to repeal the Developmental Services Act and to amend certain other statutes. If passed, this legislation will help us build rich, diverse Ontario communities where people of all abilities can participate and feel that they truly belong.

Ontario's previous developmental services legislation was designed to support people in institutions. It was a

product of its time, its face turned to the past, while Ontario looks forward to the future.

Les anciennes lois de l'Ontario concernant les services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle étaient conçues pour soutenir ces personnes dans un cadre institutionnel. Ce n'est plus le cas. Nous n'avons donc plus besoin de ces lois qui sont maintenant désuètes. Aujourd'hui, ces personnes vivent dans la collectivité où nous vivons, vous et moi. Ils sont mes voisins, vos voisins. Pour mieux les soutenir, nos lois doivent être adaptées à la nouvelle réalité.

Today we support people with a developmental disability in homes, not facilities. Today we know that people with a developmental disability enjoy meaningful lives in the community. Today we know that people with a developmental disability give back to their communities as much as they receive. And so we must update our legislation to reflect our times and new ways of thinking.

Bill 77 would legislate a modern system of more fair, flexible and sustainable supports for people with a developmental disability. It would stamp fairness, dignity and inclusion for people with a developmental disability in the letter of law, so that our laws line up with our ideals.

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Already, our government has laid the foundation to transform Ontario's developmental services system. We have invested an additional half a billion dollars in Ontario's developmental services system since taking office. Thanks to the co-operation of developmental service partners, families and the government, this investment has achieved remarkable results. Right now, our passport program is helping 2,200 young adults enjoy a bright future in their communities. We have served 8,400 more families through the special services at home program, a 40% increase since 2004.

Our four new community networks of specialized care are helping people with a dual diagnosis get the specialized care they need to thrive. And we haven't forgotten about the men and women who help people with a developmental disability reach their goals, so we have brought salaries for developmental services staff in line with other jobs in the social service field.

Ontario's developmental service system supports more than 40,000 people, with a vast \$1.5-billion budget. As we continue to invest in developmental services, we need new legislation to create a fair and sustainable system that puts people, not red tape, first, so that our developmental service system will be a leader for people with developmental disabilities, today and tomorrow. We know it's a bold vision, but we believe in it. We believe in it because of our dedicated developmental service partners. We believe in it because of the remarkable people with a developmental disability that our system is here to serve.

Nous y croyons à cause du travail acharné de nos partenaires communautaires et intervenants qui oeuvrent sans relâche dans les services aux personnes ayant une

déficience intellectuelle. Nous y croyons à cause de l'esprit remarquable des clients que nous servons.

Families and partners have told us they want service and supports that are easy to get, no matter where they live. They want more choice in the types of support they receive and greater control over how they receive them. They want to design life plans that lay out each person's distinct needs and goals. They want to be part of the process every step of the way, reviewing all the regulations before they become final. Families want the people working with their loved ones to be accountable, and our partner agencies want inspections to be conducted appropriately, with respect for the people they serve.

They talked and we listened, and I'm proud to say that our common goal of putting people with a developmental disability first led us to a consensus on most issues. After a thorough clause-by-clause review, we are confident this legislation provides better service so that people can get the service and supports they need more easily; more choice, so that people and families can tailor supports to their needs; and fairness so that everyone will be treated fairly across Ontario. With better services and supports, more choice and fairness, Ontarians with a developmental disability will be able to participate more fully in community life. This legislation has been a long time coming.

Ce projet de loi est l'aboutissement de nombreuses années de travail, de consultation, de planification et de vision. Si nous décidons de l'adopter, il mettra fin à une période, maintenant révolue, où les personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle devaient vivre en institutions.

It is the hard work over the years, and the consultations, planning and vision—that's why we've reached this level. If this passes, it will become legislation we can look back upon and say, "With this bill, we closed the doors on Ontario's institutions."

Today we are asking the members of this House to help us close the doors on all the institutions in this beautiful province. Today we are asking the members of this House to help us open the doors to Ontario's communities for people with developmental disabilities. Today we can put the ideals of fairness, dignity and inclusion into action by passing this new law.

It's a sign of nobility to have lofty ideals, but it is a sign of greatness to put those ideals into action. Let's come together to show the world the greatness of Ontario. Also, I encourage all members from both sides of the House, when the vote comes, to stand and vote in support of this bill. I encourage all of us, because it's very important, as I mentioned, to close the doors on the facilities that have existed until now in our communities and give families who have a person, a loved one with a disability, living with them a choice.

When we travelled the province for many days in many jurisdictions, from Timmins to Ottawa to London, and also in Toronto, we heard from many different families and many different stakeholders. They told us, clearly and loudly, that they want a choice. They have a right to choose the service they think is good for their loved ones.

Before I finish, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all the members from the Conservatives, the NDP and also our caucus who served on the committee. They gave us great ideas. They participated in a manner and in a fashion that helped us achieve our goal: a beautiful, good and great bill to serve people with disabilities across Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to have this opportunity to reply briefly to the Minister of Community and Social Services and to her parliamentary assistant, the member for London-Fanshawe, with respect to third reading of Bill 77, An Act to provide services to persons with developmental disabilities, to repeal the Developmental Services Act and to amend certain other statutes.

I want to congratulate and thank the members of our caucus who participated on the standing committee that dealt with this bill over the summer break—the member for Dufferin-Caledon, our critic in this area, as well as the member for Whitby-Oshawa—who did an extraordinary job during four days of public hearings on this bill, listening to families, listening to the people who believe that this government could do more to help families with a member who has a developmental disability.

Certainly, in my riding of Wellington-Halton Hills, I have heard from people who support an organization called Families for a Secure Future. Friends of mine—Marv and Nancy McDougall of Hillsburgh—have been very active in that organization for many years. I believe the organization has existed for some 15 years, and it exists to ensure that there are planning supports in place for families who are in this situation. As you know, Mr. Speaker, because this has been raised in the House on a number of occasions, and as the Minister of Community and Social Services is well aware, this organization has been forced to seek private funding to continue its activities because of insufficient support from the government.

So I want to use this time to ask the minister one last time, in the context of this debate on Bill 77, if she is willing to inform the House that she will be coming forward with new initiatives that will address the concerns that have been identified and brought forward by Families for a Secure Future. I hope that the minister will be willing to re-evaluate their concerns and come forward with a plan that will address their concerns to ensure they can have confidence, going forward into the future, that their family members will be dealt with and looked after in the way they want and in the way they need. I ask the minister, in her response, to address this issue.

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Mr. Michael Prue: In response to the minister and the parliamentary assistant, I listened very carefully to your words. They were careful; they were well-chosen. But I am left with the feeling that these well-chosen words will not see action in the light of day.

I am reminded of what many of the participants, many of the people who came forward to the committee, had to

say over those four days of hearings in Toronto, in London, in Timmins and in Ottawa, and what they were really asking for: the changes that needed to take place in this bill to make it workable and to make it really dynamic and powerful.

Two of the things that were most common in the debate from those hundred or so individuals were that they wanted a preamble—and I listened intently to the minister and the parliamentary assistant, but there was nary a word about the government's refusal to include a preamble in this legislation, one that would enforce the strength of the legislation, one that would guide the courts and Parliament, or workers in the system. It's not there.

The minister included nothing in her statement—nor did the parliamentary assistant—about the waiting lists which remain in the bill, and I'm puzzled why they have not come forward and proudly proclaimed the need that they feel for waiting lists. There was nothing at all said, and I will be spending some time myself on that. There was nothing, of course, about the rights for workers, which was intended to be put in the bill, where some of these workers will be hired by families—the rights that they might have. It was not proclaimed or not part of the bill either.

So we have before us a bill, and we have very flowery and very nice language and hopes for the future. I have those and share those same hopes, but I'm hoping that during the course of the debate other government members will stand and defend what the government has done in committee and why the bill has not gone as far forward as it should have.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? The member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on Bill 77. I, along with many of my colleagues in this House, had the opportunity to travel with the committee during the months of summer across Toronto, Ottawa, Timmins and London, listening to the views of many of those people who are affected by this legislation or the previous legislation and will benefit from this legislation.

At the outset, I want to thank all the members who very thoroughly participated in the process during the committee, especially from the Progressive Conservative side and the NDP. We had some really good discussions to ensure that we do make this legislation better than what was in front of the committee.

There were two types of people whose submissions really struck me. One was people who do suffer from developmental disability, and their point of view matters most when considering the improvements to this legislation, and secondly, the parents who are really involved and engaged in the lives of their children who are suffering from developmental disability. Their comments and points of view are extremely helpful, and they were supportive of this legislation. One of the key reasons they were supportive of this legislation is the fact that it gives parents the choice as to how they will look after and care

for their family members. It gives them the choice to use the funding from the government to ensure that they have a life plan, that they have the services necessary to ensure that their loved ones are prospering and are equal members of this society and this community. That is the most fundamental thing about this legislation, and that's why I'm very proud to support this legislation. There were some concerns we heard, and in the clause-by-clause process, those decisions and changes were made. Thank you very much.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to add some comments to the speech from the minister and the parliamentary assistant on Bill 77, the Services for Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008. I would like to speak about the experience I've had in my own constituency of Parry Sound-Muskoka to do with people applying for the individualized funding and the Passport funding. I have to tell you that I think it's safe to say in just about all cases, either the people are turned down or they get inadequate funding put forward. I would like to bring specific cases forward.

I had a constituent, Louisa Crosswaite, come in and speak to me about her son David, who has acquired brain injury, and the northeast regional office had just not been helpful and they haven't been successful in getting the help they need. I've had Debbie Vernon, who has been advocating for her sister Karen Jobbins, who used to have individualized funding. That has now been taken away. Her mother was helping to look after Karen, who is roughly about 50 years old—I wouldn't want to guess too accurately. She used to have individualized funding. She is now in the Pines Long Term Care Home and that's not the right spot for Karen Jobbins. She could have a much better quality of life if she had proper individualized funding through the Passport program.

I had a family with an autistic child come into my office. They've not received adequate support from the northeast region. They've had to go south to Toronto, and it's making family life very difficult for them. One spouse has to drive to Toronto all the time to be able to get service. I would just comment that the current situation is not good. People are not receiving the funding they need, and there seems to be no willingness or capacity at least on the part of the northeast region to provide the help that people in the region of Parry Sound-Muskoka need.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Response?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I thank the members from Wellington-Halton Hills, Beaches-East York, Ottawa Centre and Parry Sound-Muskoka for their input into the debate.

I'm very proud to stand here today in support of Bill 77. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members from the opposition parties for all their input. I think that they will agree with me that their suggestions were taken into consideration. Most of them were included in the amended bill. We have listened to the families and we've listened to our partners in this mis-

sion. For instance, we had Christian Horizons, Autism Ontario, Community Living, Reena, OASIS, Family Alliance and the Provincial Network, and they all came with very good suggestions. We have heard people speaking from the opposition. They are not happy because some of their suggestions were not included. I think most of the suggestions were included.

I'm thinking about Lorraine, who was placed, when she was four years old, into Smiths Falls, not speaking a word of English. She was there because her mother had no other option. Imagine being in an institution where you cannot be understood and nobody understands you. I'm speaking on behalf of Catherine and her parents, who wanted to keep her at home or have her close to home. That's what this bill is doing. Thanks again to all of you for your input.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member for Caledon—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Dufferin-Caledon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Dufferin-Caledon. Thank you. It's been a long summer.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I will be sharing my time with my colleague the member from Whitby-Oshawa. We have both participated in the public hearings and the committee process, and it's important that she share her valuable insights into this legislation.

I must begin by saying that while I appreciate the minister's kind words about listening to the opposition, we did put forward 66 amendments in the committee clause-by-clause process, and not one was passed by the government members. It's passing strange that she would say our input was valuable when we made the effort to put forward 66 amendments, only to have them all turned down rather quickly and with very little debate.

Bill 77 has been quite an education for me. I was looking forward to participating in the updating and modernization of the Developmental Services Act. Many of us in this chamber were here when the minister stood during Community Living Day in May to announce her proposed bill. In fact, many of us saw it as an opportunity to make right some of the inequities that individuals with developmental disabilities experience at the hands of our government. Transformation agendas are very powerful words. They imply more than simply change. They convey the need of renewal or a complete makeover.

The Liberal government started this whole process with these two words: "transformation agenda." Families and stakeholders were told that real change was coming. After all, the act had not been rewritten since the 1970s. "Something must be done. We will transform." Expectations were built up. Everyone willingly participated in the consultations. Families thought that this was the opportunity to develop the needed life plan for their children. Then Bill 77 was tabled, and the ministry had not transformed; they had simply tinkered. A new category of service was added in words but not action—no additional funding, no additional supports.

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So instead of applause, the Liberal caucus heard concern. "Transformation agenda" had sounded so revolution-

ary, but Bill 77 only delivered disappointment. Another Liberal promise has been broken. As the concern mounted, the Liberal government response was to speed up the process: "A quick second reading, four days of committee, and we can get this thing done." It didn't matter that there were many more interested in presenting in Toronto than spaces available. People would simply need to travel. After all, you thought the consultation had already occurred.

Unfortunately, during the committee process you did not listen. Our party has heard from families who wanted real change, not just tinkering. They are the ones caring for their children at home and they are the ones we need to support. They gave us good advice during the public hearings, and when my colleagues and I tried to put their feedback into the bill, you defeated each and every one of their 66 suggestions.

Since becoming the Progressive Conservative critic for community and social services, I've had the opportunity to meet with many exceptional individuals, exceptional people who have been working hard to make sure that opportunities exist for their children after they reach the age of 21 and are no longer able to participate in their communities through the school system; families who were truly hoping for some legislation that acknowledged their work in the developmental disability sector and gave them the tools they needed to ensure their children's inclusion in our communities.

I was really very hopeful that by bringing forward this legislation the government had thought through how best to achieve some of the laudable goals that they speak of in their transformation agenda paper, the transformation agenda paper that Ernie Parsons presented to Minister Sandra Pupatello when she was the Minister of Community and Social Services. Instead, I see Bill 77 as a poorly worded, poorly thought-through example of a government that wants to say, "See. We did it. We reformed the Developmental Services Act." But please don't look too closely or you will see the gaping holes from their words to what's in the bill.

The minister speaks of wanting to assist families who chose to have their adult children live with them in the community, but Bill 77 does nothing to assist them in their desire to have lifelong planning included in the legislation. The minister speaks of wanting to assist families who choose to build a plan and hire their own support staff to assist them executing this plan but says nothing about how she intends to fund a program that is wholly inadequate for the number of individuals who wish to access it.

In the last session of this Legislature, during question period, I raised individual examples with the minister about the many families who have spent hundreds and hundreds of hours applying for the Passport funding, only to be told over and over again all across Ontario, "There is no more money to fund Passport." Families are trying to plan and families are frustrated because all the planning in the world isn't going to help them find meaningful engagement for their children as they age out of the school system.

I want to read you an excerpt from one letter I received, because in this chamber I think we can quickly insulate ourselves from the reality of what is happening in our communities and across Ontario and how our decisions truly impact families. This letter is from a father who had a son graduate from the school system in June. Patrick is 20 and has already been told by the school system that he's not welcome to return this fall, even though he does not turn 21 until December. The first door has been slammed shut. Then, because his father says staying home is simply not an option for Patrick's parents, he's trying to prepare Patrick for his future. Patrick's family began the process to apply for the Passport initiative. Actually, they were encouraged to apply for the Passport initiative. I don't know how many members of this chamber have received the forms necessary to complete a Passport application, but I can tell you it would be well worth your time to do so. The application is cumbersome, it is detailed and it is not a quick read. These applications are incredibly time-consuming for the family and detailed in the information they expect families to put together. Only after all of the hurdles were passed was there any indication that no new funding had been allocated for Passport—another door shut for Patrick.

Please keep in mind that this is one family that has been proactively working to ensure that their son has not been left out in the cold with no opportunity to be part of his community. In the words of Patrick's father, "I can't believe this is true—that the government would create a brand new process (no doubt costly) and provincial application for day supports and tell families about it, get our hopes [up] and then not provide funding for it!" Well, believe it. It is exactly what has happened. Family Alliance Ontario has released figures that 2,890 families applied for Passport funding and only 254 received it. With all due respect, I cannot think of another program where you would encourage families to apply, knowing full well that the chances of them actually receiving any funds is so poor. Talk about setting someone up for failure.

I could tell you many more stories about many more Patricks. As one mother described it to me, she has a daughter who is surfing the sofa because she cannot find opportunities in her community and her Passport application has been put into the "No funding available" file. It is dishonest for this government to encourage families to apply for Passports knowing that they have to and that there's no money in the fund. I cannot imagine why they thought they would get away with setting up a program with great fanfare, only to have it die on the vine because they won't fund it adequately. My understanding is that there are today over 3,000 families waiting for Passport funding—3,000 adult children sitting at home, surfing the sofa, waiting for this government to stop talking and actually fund a program that families want and families need.

The public hearings on Bill 77 were very useful to me. I was impressed with the level of consensus that came

from the presenters. We heard from organizations, from workers in the developmental disability sector, from family members struggling to work under the existing inadequate system and individuals living with the nightmare of no services and no action from this government. So many presenters spoke of their concern that the application centres would simply become another barrier to service. So what does this government do? They rename them "application entities." That's not responding to the concerns. Throwing out a new name is an insult to the people who raised their concerns that application centres would end up being another hurdle, another barrier for inadequate services.

Person-directed planning was another request that families and organizations wanted included in this legislation—person-directed planning that would allow individuals their circle of support, to work through what was the best way to ensure an individual's inclusion in our communities. Person-directed planning has been happening across Ontario for years. Individualized plans showed people's desire to have an ordinary life living in the community. It's not about which bed is available in which group home, which day program is available in which community. It's a desire for true inclusion, true community engagement, not filling the few spots and beds that are available.

There is an excellent study prepared by John Lord that shows individualized funding has many benefits, but specifically highlights the need for planning to ensure its success. If I was a cynical person, I might question whether this government is trying to make the Passport initiative program fail, because they're not prepared to fund it adequately or legislate the need for individualized planning. Once again, the Liberal government added the words "person-directed funding" into the legislation but didn't explain how it would work or who would pay for it.

We need to keep in mind that for the vast majority of individuals living with a developmental disability, these are very real issues that they deal with every day. Eighty per cent of individuals living with developmental disabilities do so with the support of their families, not government. As legislators, we need to start figuring out how to help these families thrive, not simply survive. Let's come up with some proactive, family-friendly—to borrow a phrase—policies that can actually make life better for individuals living in Ontario, and better for all Ontarians. Everyone benefits.

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I was interested in something I read recently that said, "Organizations whose workforces mirror the communities are better positioned to understand the needs of their customers.... Studies show that when employees with disabilities are hired, there is a corresponding increase in worker morale, teamwork and employee satisfaction that correlates with better product and service quality." There's no mention in Bill 77 of how we can link or connect to the community. If we've got this legislation right, it's not only the individuals and families who are going to benefit, it is all of us.

I'd now like to specifically raise a few of the issues that my colleague from Whitby-Oshawa and I raised in committee and were shot down, for lack of a better word—voted down very quickly without debate. One of the sections refers to waiting lists—it has been raised already, but I think it's important to point it out again. In Bill 77, there is a section that says, "A funding entity may establish waiting lists for services and supports provided by service agencies under this act and for direct funding and shall manage those lists in accordance with any applicable policy directives." Based on what I'm hearing from the Family Alliance organization, that waiting list is already going to have 2,000 people on it only for the Passport funding. I can't imagine what it's going to be for group home beds and day program supports. They are instituting waiting lists in Bill 77 when the reality is that the waiting lists are what need to be solved, not the wording in Bill 77.

The second issue I'd like to talk about, which has not been raised, is that we heard from a number of individuals living in group homes who are very concerned about a section in the bill that deals with what I'll call warrantless entry—inspections without warrant. It essentially will allow ministry staff to walk into their homes without any agreement on their part. I'll read the pertinent section: "An inspector may carry out an inspection under this act in order to determine if a service agency, an application entity or a funding entity is complying with this act, the regulations...."

"Subject to subsection (3), at any reasonable time, an inspector may, without warrant and in accordance with the prescribed criteria, enter premises that are owned or operated by a service agency, an application entity or a funding entity in order to carry out an inspection."

I, and members of the Progressive Conservative Party, have a real problem when we are making a second class of citizens. I have the ability to refuse entry to my home, yet we are saying to people who have developmental disabilities, "You are not going to be afforded the same rights and courtesies as the rest of society." I would like to highlight subsection 143(2) in the Long-Term Care Homes Act: "No inspector shall enter a place that is not in a long-term-care home and that is being used as a dwelling, except with the consent of the occupier of the place or under the authority of a warrant."

If it's good enough for us in the general population, if it's good enough for individuals who live in long-term-care facilities, why isn't it good enough for people who are living in group homes? These are their homes, and they should be afforded the same rights and courtesies as the rest of society.

The last point I would like to raise deals with regulations. There has been a lot of discussion with Bill 77, and quite frankly with many of the bills that have come forward recently, about how much is left to regulation, how the bills themselves speak in very general, generic language and the proof is in the pudding, as they say, when you get to the regulation stage, where of course there is no clause-by-clause and there are no public hearings.

There are a myriad of regulations that will be put in place to go with Bill 77. Just looking at the end of the act, there are 17 sections, and of course each section could have a number of different regulations, where regulations will be put in place after the fact. So after we've debated it, after we've had our public hearings, then the cabinet is going to be making the detailed decisions about how Bill 77 will be implemented. While I would acknowledge, after a lot of pressure from groups concerned about how much is left to regulation, the ministry has now said that they will post the regulations, there is no obligation on behalf of the ministry to justify what those regulations will be and why they're bringing them forward. Yes, they've agreed to post them on the site.

For anyone who is interested in this sector, I would encourage you to monitor that quite closely because it is something that may not happen all at once; they'll trickle them out over months and years. It is a great concern to me that we in this chamber, as legislators, are expected to vote on Bill 77 and yet we do not have the detail that is really needed because so much of it has been left to regulation. I know I've spoken of my concerns with how this government is using regulations as a backdoor way of passing legislation and getting the detail in, but I think it's important to raise it in the context of Bill 77 because so much of it has been there.

I think I will wrap up with that, but I would like to very much thank all of the families, the organizations and the communities. When I did those four days of public hearings, it impressed me to no end how much detail, how much studying they had done of the bill before they presented. Keep in mind, these were five-minute presentations, so they were able to dissect the bill and highlight the issues that were of concern to them very quickly.

Another thing that I think we should remember: If you look at the presentations and if you look at the written submissions that were brought to the committee, there is a very consistent theme throughout. This is not a case of the workers wanting something very different from the families, who wanted something very different from the organizations. There is without a doubt a theme of people who had a true desire to have Bill 77 be more than just words. They wanted the action behind it. I would submit to you that we haven't achieved it with Bill 77.

On that note, I will pass the debate on to my capable colleague from Whitby-Oshawa.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Thank you to my colleague the member from Dufferin-Caledon for sharing her time with me on this important piece of legislation, which, in my view, had the potential to become one of the most transformative and important pieces of legislation that we've had the opportunity to deal with in this Legislature in a very long time, and certainly during my time in the Legislature.

I say "had the potential" because, to the tremendous disappointment of many groups and individuals, including myself, Bill 77 has failed to set out the framework to achieve the transformation of the developmental services sector that the minister touted during the introduction of the bill last May.

It's true that in providing for direct funding of services and supports for people with developmental disabilities and their families, Bill 77 provides for a range of options besides the traditional group home. I applaud this initiative being taken by the minister, and certainly the time had come for us to deal with that because the Developmental Services Act was badly out of date with life in the 21st century. It hadn't been improved since 1974 and reflected a view of people with developmental disabilities rooted in the past.

At the hearings before the social policy committee, many families told us that they wanted to either keep their children at home with them, with supports, or wanted to be able to plan as independent a life for them in their community as possible. Clearly, significant amendments to the Developmental Services Act were going to be necessary in order to achieve those goals. But whatever choice is to be made, whether to choose a group home, whether to live at home with supports or live independently in the community, it all takes money.

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We heard from many individuals and groups as we travelled with the social policy committee from Toronto to London, to Timmins and to Ottawa. Virtually, to a person, all of the presenters stated that this bill was going to be doomed to failure without a massive influx of funds into this sector. One parent actually told us that the parents over the years had saved the government hundreds of millions of dollars because they had kept their children at home and cared for them and never asked for anything, and I believe this to be true. But we also heard from many of the parents that they were growing older; many were no longer able to care for their children at home, and it was time for the government to come to their assistance.

There was one woman in particular who stood out in my mind. She was probably around 75 years old, and she was literally in tears as she was describing what her life was like caring for her now middle-aged daughter in an old farmhouse in a rural area. Her husband was now disabled because of years of hard work, farming. Between them, they had cared for her daughter. She was crying as she told us about the tremendous strain, both emotional and physical, it had taken on her. And it wasn't because she begrudged her life. It was more that she was really, truly frightened about what was going to happen to her child in the future, when she and her husband were gone. She was concerned about where she would live, but more important than that, who was going to love and care for her daughter. I think that's what this bill was meant to be all about. In my view, this question remains outstanding, and that, in my opinion, is why Bill 77 remains fundamentally flawed.

When she introduced the bill in this Legislature on May 15, the minister stated, "If this bill is passed, we will be able to look back and say, 'We took a giant step forward in building stronger and more inclusive communities for all Ontarians.'" Sadly, Bill 77 takes only a small step forward and fails to establish the framework necessary for full inclusion in our communities.

Many people at the committee noted that people with an intellectual disability had very few social, recreational and vocational opportunities after they turned 21. Most have finished school, and there are still very few employers who are willing to take the time and trouble to train and assist people with a developmental disability. Moreover, there are significant restrictions on the amount that people with a developmental disability can earn if they are able to secure employment because of the restrictions placed on them by the Ontario disability support program.

Many people reported that their children's lives were very isolated and that they spent their days watching television, sitting on the couch, because they were unable to access the Passport funding which would allow them access to community supports. My colleague has spoken quite extensively about the lack of money available for Passport funding, and while it was touted as being a great solution and certainly has the ability to do that, it's so hugely underfunded that all it ended up doing was allowing a few people supports in the community. But it almost pitted parent against parent because it was like a lottery as to who was going to get to be chosen to receive the Passport funding.

Bill 77 was supposed to change that. It was supposed to get people off the couch and into the community. It was supposed to shift the paradigm to focus on abilities and not disabilities and to achieve the goals of independence and acceptance. But it does not, and that, to me, is a great pity, given the enormous opportunity presented by this bill.

In my view, there are three principal reasons why Bill 77 has failed to meet its goal. First, as has been noted by several members, the bill fails to set out its guiding principles in a preamble or purpose clause. In failing to accept the many recommendations in support of such a clause, the government members stated in the clause-by-clause review at committee that it was unnecessary because the bill itself demonstrated the inclusion of people with developmental disabilities, and so no more really needed to be said. Yet when we in the Progressive Conservative Party attempted to introduce an amendment that would have changed the short title of the bill to the "Services and supports to promote the inclusion of persons with developmental disabilities act," we were advised by legislative counsel that this absolutely could not be done, because nowhere was inclusion mentioned in the body of the act—so much for wanting to achieve inclusion. It wasn't even mentioned, and therefore the title couldn't be changed.

Nonetheless, the government pushed through an amendment that changed the name to the Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008. So we have a bill that mentions inclusion—one of its purported fundamental goals—only in its short title.

It's significant to note that at least 25 individuals and organizations spoke quite passionately at committee about the need to include a preamble or purpose clause in

Bill 77. And I would like to take a moment to quote from a few of the presenters. Family Alliance Ontario, through Ms. Cathy Calligan and Ms. Janice Strickland, made a compelling presentation to the social policy committee in London, Ontario, on August 6. They stated that Family Alliance Ontario feels that this legislation in its current form lacks philosophy and is wide open to interpretation. A preamble is needed to document the spirit and intent of this legislation. A preamble would serve as a compass pointing the Ministry of Community and Social Services towards its stated goal and would ensure that the legislation and its ensuing regulations achieve the intent of the values and principles in Opportunities and Action. This preamble should clearly state the intention to move from historical approaches such as services and programs to inclusion and valued lives in the community.

Similarly, Community Living Ontario, in its response to the amendments to Bill 77, stated:

"It is when we consider the United Nations Convention"—which I would like to come back to in a moment—"that we see most clearly the opportunity that has been missed by not including a preamble or purpose clause in the legislation. The supports and services available through this act can provide practical mechanisms for ensuring that people who have an intellectual disability have access to all elements of society, including education, health, transportation, justice systems and other parts of society. The legislation as it is drafted, without a preamble, could result in a range of outcomes. It could simply result in a future that looks much like the present (without large institutions, of course), or the legislation could help to facilitate the kind of future envisioned by the UN convention, one in which people who have an intellectual disability are supported to live autonomous lives and enjoy their rights as full citizens in our society. A preamble to the legislation would have gone a long way to describing and pointing the way to that future. We remain optimistic that we through our collective efforts will achieve such a future, but we are saddened that the opportunity was lost to boldly spell out our intention within the legislation."

Clearly, the addition of a preamble or purpose clause was seen by many as an important element to Bill 77, an important element that unfortunately the government chose to ignore.

The second reason, in my view, that Bill 77 has failed to meet its goal is its failure to honour the principles established by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which came into effect on May 3, 2008. Canada has yet to ratify this agreement, and therefore it's not binding on either our country or our province, yet it sets out a bold vision that should not have been discounted. The general principles of the convention are:

"(a) Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons;

"(b) Non-discrimination;

"(c) Full and effective participation and inclusion in society;

“(d) Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity;

“(e) Equality of opportunity;

“(f) Accessibility;

“(g) Equality between men and women;

“(h) Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities.”

More particularly, article 12 deals with the principle of equal recognition before the law and states that persons with disabilities have the right to recognition everywhere as persons before the law, enjoy legal capacity on an equal basis with others in all aspects of life, and that all parties supporting the convention “shall take appropriate measures to provide access by persons with disabilities to the support they may require in exercising their legal capacity.”

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Mr. Speaker, 23 presenters at committee spoke about the need for the bill to include the concept of supported decision-making in the context of the UN convention and, though the amended bill mentions the need to confer with the individual and their family members about their wishes for their life, little more than lip service is paid to this concept.

Supported decision-making permits persons with disabilities to exercise their legal capacity to make decisions to the fullest extent possible. A Handbook for Parliamentarians on the UN convention says this: “With supported decision-making, the presumption is always in favour of the person with a disability who will be affected by the decision. The individual is the decision-maker; the support person(s) explain(s) the issues, when necessary, and interpret(s) the signs and preferences of the individual.

“Even when an individual with a disability requires total support, the support person(s) should enable the individual to exercise his/her legal capacity to the greatest extent possible, according to the wishes of the individual.”

One of the most poignant presentations made to the committee was by a group of representatives from an organization called People First of Ontario, which is a province-wide organization made up of and run by people who have been labelled with a developmental disability. The representatives stated that one of the most important things People First does is to assist people who are labelled to have a voice and be heard. They reminded the committee: “The government really needs to remember we are the ones directly affected by the proposed changes to this act. At the end of the day, government people and agency staff go home to a life that they have tried to make good. We go home to what we have been able to get. The more this act and the government of Ontario begin to see us as individuals who want to live in the community with proper supports, the better that home and life will be.”

Unfortunately, the individual's involvement in decision-making seems to have been largely overlooked in this bill.

The third key element for success in achieving inclusion that was missed in Bill 77 is that of person-directed planning. Here, a full 36 presenters commented at committee about the need to include person-directed planning as a funded element in the act. Many of the presenters, which included family members of persons with a developmental disability, commented that independent planning assistance was necessary, particularly in the context of direct or individualized funding, in order for them and their family members to understand simply what supports were out in the community for them to access. More than once we heard that the daily demands upon family members were so significant that they simply were overwhelmed by having to deal with making a plan for their family member. As much as they wanted to do so and felt that it was necessary, they simply didn't know and couldn't deal with it.

To some extent, the government heard what the presenters were saying and included a provision allowing for some funded planning supports. However, in the words of Community Living Ontario, “The amendments did not, however, make planning an entitlement for all people who are determined eligible for services and supports, which we had called for. The amendment also did not specify that planning would be available to a person prior to applying for services in order to assist the person to complete an application in an informed fashion,” although they hoped that this could be addressed through regulation and policy.

We in the PC Party are not so hopeful. In our view, the concept of person-directed planning to assist in the development of a life plan for the individual is essential and should have been featured prominently in the legislation and not simply included as an afterthought. It is the key to the success of the so-called transformation of developmental services as it focuses on the needs of the individual and is the bridge between the individual and the community that brings about true inclusion.

One presenter, Ms. Sherri Kroll, who is the director of organizational development with Middlesex Community Living in Strathroy, made the case most eloquently when she stated, “The entire system envisioned by Bill 77 can only have integrity if persons seeking support services under the new legislation are clear about what it is they wish to apply for. Without that, they will face the same situation that has prevailed down through the years; namely, they will be offered services from a list that has been identified by someone else as appropriate in general terms for an entire population. People need supports that are uniquely appropriate to their personal needs at a particular stage of their lives. True person-directed planning looks not only at supports that may be accessed under the provisions of this legislation, but also at supports that are available in the context of the individual's family, community and natural supports, which can often be accessed without government funding or other intervention.”

Indeed, one of the independent planning groups spoke quite passionately about this at committee, the group that was referred to earlier called Families for a Secure

Future, which spoke about building circles of support around the individuals and their families that were both paid and unpaid circles. This support would assist in integrating the individual truly into the community and would continue for the individual's lifetime, which gave great comfort to the family members, particularly the parents, because that, of course, is one of their greatest fears: What will happen to my child after I've left?

Through planning supports such as this, which is more than just the coordination of service agencies—and when I say this, I appreciate very much the work that has been done and the passion that the presenters from the community organizations brought forward, groups like Family Alliance Ontario, Community Living and all of the ad hoc groups that have gotten together to bring about the best supports that they can for the people in their community. They have done a wonderful job, but they need to have more help. I know that they want to help achieve this inclusionary piece, but there's a huge, big planning component there that really has been overlooked and really needs to be included in this legislation. To me, it's the linchpin of success, and that's what brings the individual into the community and achieves the reverse effect: It allows members of the community to be more aware of, and compassionate about, the needs of the individual and the communities. So it helps the individual, but to my mind, it helps the community so much more because it makes all of us such better people as a result. But it's very unfortunate that the government failed to see the significance of these planning supports, and although they're mentioned, they are not really given the importance and the pre-eminence in the legislation that they deserve.

I'd like to close my comments by quoting a recent article by Mr. Ian Brown that was written for the *Globe and Mail*. The article appeared in the newspaper on September 6 of this year and was about Jean Vanier, who, many members will know, is the founder of L'Arche. L'Arche was founded over 44 years ago and is based on the principles of inclusion. All those years ago, Jean Vanier bought a house for himself to live in, along with two profoundly developmentally delayed men, with no other plan than to live together, travel and have fun. Little did he know at the time he started L'Arche that it would some day become an international movement that is the very embodiment of inclusion. In any event, the article starts with the following:

"Everybody with a seriously handicapped person in their life knows this fantasy. The fantasy is a place, somewhere the handicapped person will be able to live and be cared for, not as someone handicapped but as a participating member of the world for as long as they survive.

"It's a fantasy, but a compelling one.

"In the fantasy, there are no run-down group homes on the edges of cities, out where the housing is cheap but not exactly uplifting, where there are always too many extension cords shaking across the floor.

"Instead, in the fantasy, there are communities of people, preferably in the country or perhaps by the sea,

living in gorgeous, architected houses because (fantasy thinking goes) the handicapped have so few satisfactions, don't they deserve to live in a beautiful place as much as any of us?

"Another thing about the fantasy is that there are no distinctions between the handicapped and the professional social workers who care for them, between the normal and the broken, no wall between Them and Us.

"They are simply people who live together and they help each other. The workers do the physical work, the handicapped do the work of the heart."

That's indeed a compelling vision, but I very much regret to say that I don't believe this vision can be achieved through Bill 77. Therefore, unfortunately, I cannot support it.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

M^{re} France Gélinas: It's a pleasure to answer to the comments made by the honourable member from Dufferin-Caledon and the honourable member from Whitby-Oshawa.

The member from Dufferin-Caledon started by mentioning that her party had presented 66 amendments to the bill in clause-by-clause, and although the member of the government mentioned that they appreciated the feedback, they accepted zero of their amendments. For the New Democrats, we presented 32 amendments to this act and two of them were accepted. I guess this is a little bit of feedback, but very little.

Du côté des néo-démocrates, le projet de loi 77, Loi visant à prévoir des services pour les personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle, est un projet de loi important pour nous. Les services aux personnes ayant des déficiences intellectuelles en ce moment sont défectueux. Groupe après groupe est venu devant le comité cet été pour dire que ces personnes n'ont pas les ressources suffisantes pour pouvoir vivre en communauté et pouvoir faire vraiment partie des communautés. Donc on aurait aimé, avec les 32 modifications que nous avons proposées, renforcer le projet de loi pour vraiment aller au cœur des demandes des gens qui vivent avec des déficiences intellectuelles.

People after people who came to present clearly made the case that the funding for people with developmental disabilities is inadequate. This bill had an opportunity to change things, but right now it contains very little.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I want to highlight in the few moments that I have the importance of the steps that this government is taking. The current Developmental Services Act is almost 35 years old. Those who sit on the opposite benches in this House governed this province for many of those 35 years, and they chose not to make it a priority to overhaul or update this legislation. I say to Ontarians: We have. We have made it a priority to modernize the developmental services system, to improve the services, to increase choice, to improve fairness, to update the language that we use, amongst many other

changes that are rooted in this very important piece of legislation.

It's a piece of legislation that's moved forward under the leadership of our minister, Madame Meilleur, and her parliamentary assistant, Khalil Ramal, who have been working actively with those in this community to engage them, to seek their advice, to solicit their comments, to make sure that this new bill reflected the reality of their lives. We spoke to the people of Ontario, we listened to them and we made many changes to the bill at their request.

Parties opposite have talked this morning about 66 amendments coming forward. I think it's important for Ontarians to understand that that is not 66 concepts or 66 ideas, but 66 words—because ideas flow, and legislation, if anybody's ever picked up a bill, knows that they're not user-friendly in the way that we draft legislation. But ultimately, this bill is about moving the developmental services sector forward, to help families that we all meet with in our constituency offices every day. It has the support of the members on this side of the House. We will continue to work with those families to make sure that further changes are put in place. This bill will help set the foundation so that we can continue to do the important work that needs to be done in this sector.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I want to congratulate everyone who worked on this bill. It's a hugely important subject; the folks who are actually challenged with going through life in a challenged way need advocates. So I congratulate everybody who worked on the bill and tried to make it as good as possible.

However, I really believe that what we have here is an opportunity lost. We had a good start, and we had people who have had experience, who live with issues every day, who were generous enough and courageous enough to come and present before the committee, present ideas from their own personal opinions, their own personal experiences, with heart and with passion. Unfortunately, it fell mostly on deaf ears with the government members of that committee.

It's unfortunate because once this opportunity passes, it will be quite some time before it can be resurrected and some meaningful changes put into the bill that really work for people.

So this isn't about photo ops; this isn't about taking glory in a campaign pamphlet. This is about people who live every day of their lives in a challenged situation. They thought they were coming here to this House to contribute, and the door was shut for them. It was nothing but words, and I am very sorry for that. I have to go back to my community, as do many others, to say yes, we had an opportunity but the opportunity was lost.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I was listening carefully to the members from Dufferin—Caledon and Whitby—Oshawa speaking on this bill.

First, I want to thank them very much for their ideas and their input on this bill during the consultation process across the province of Ontario. But it's unfair to say we don't listen. We listened to many different stakeholders;

we listened to families; we listened to people with disabilities. They told us many different things and they advised us.

After we came back to discuss it through the clause-by-clause, we made a lot of changes to reflect their needs, their suggestions and their ideas. We talked about application centres. People said application centres weren't a good idea. We changed it to a different system—entities, two entities, one for processing the application and another one to decide the funding, because we thought it was very important to make people accountable and make it a transparent issue.

We talked about inspections, and many people came and told us they needed inspection because they wanted their loved ones to be protected; they don't want them to be subjected to abuse. All of these elements were addressed through the bill, through our consultations when the people came to us and spoke many different times.

Talking about the details in the regulations, as you know, all the bills come before this House. It's impossible for all the bills to include all the details. That's why we decided to talk about the general ideas and the principles. When we go back to the civil servants and the follow-up, and they put in all the regulations, in consultation with the stakeholders—and I hope many of the stakeholders who presented to us during the consultations come forward and support our ministry to put in the regulations they think are important to strengthen this bill.

In the end, this bill is about people. It's about people with disabilities; it's about their families, who will care for their loved ones for many years. We want to give them the choice, the choice they need, the choice they think is important for them and for their families.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Response?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm very happy that the member from Whitby—Oshawa ended by talking about Jean Vanier, because to me, if we lose sight of why we're debating Bill 77, and why we're trying to improve the developmental disability sector, then we're all here for the wrong reason. Thank you for your comments, the members from Nickel Belt, Etobicoke—Lakeshore, London—Fanshawe, and my seatmate from Burlington.

While I am obviously disappointed that 66 Progressive Conservative amendments were voted down in committee, I should clarify by saying they weren't 66 Progressive Conservative amendments. These were amendments that were brought forward by organizations like Community Living, OASIS, People First—families who have been living in the sector and trying to work within the existing rules for 10 or 20 years.

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So while they went under our banner, they were certainly not our ideas. I and my colleague from Whitby—Oshawa worked very hard to try to translate what we had heard at the committee level into concrete legislative amendments that we felt would bring forward the ideas

they had raised. Changing the application centre to an application entity, with all due respect, does not accomplish that goal. Including "person-directed planning" as a phrase without talking about how you're going to fund it and implement it does not achieve that goal. Concerns about entrenching waiting lists are still in the legislation, so I do still have a lot of concerns with it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: It is indeed a privilege to be here today to talk about this bill. As I said earlier this morning, I listened intently to what the minister and parliamentary assistant had to say and I have to commend them for the language, for the hope that was conveyed, but I think there's a whole lot more that needs to be said about this bill. I don't think I could say it any better than one of the deputants had to say on the very first day of public hearings in Toronto. He encapsulated in terse and correct language exactly what the community is expecting, and I would like to quote him verbatim. His name is Mr. Ronald Pruessen, and I take this from the Hansard of that day of the committee. He is from the group known as Opportunities Mississauga for 21 Plus—in abbreviated short form, OM21.

"It is a wonderful thing that you have worked with families and agencies to chart a road forward, but it is an achievement that now carries serious responsibilities with it. Do not imagine that the admiration that has been generated by the transformation effort to date will either linger or quietly fade away if words do not translate into deeds. There will almost surely be a whirlwind of disappointment and anger if the government sees the essentially preparatory provisions of Bill 77 as sufficient or if the government believes that the template or shell conceptualized in this bill will allow the transformation effort to quietly come to rest on a back burner.

"Do not imagine, either, that tiny funding increases will allow achievement of a necessarily ambitious vision, especially if minimalist new funding is dedicated primarily to administrative procedures, application centres and the like. If this happens, then the template or the shell that Bill 77 is designed to create will be seen as the set-up for a shell game, and 'shell game' will be a fair and loudly proclaimed label.

"To conclude, we urge the government to continue as it has begun—to continue boldly as it has admirably begun. Take the splendid impulse to transform the services provided to Ontario citizens whose needs and vulnerabilities have been neglected for decades and match fine words with powerful actions."

Mr. Pruessen said what everyone in the community was hoping this bill would do, and he has indeed immense hopes for what I'm sure will happen in the weeks and months that pass after the passage of this bill in the next few days. But he is also mindful of the fact that what has been put forward in this bill is going to require a fundamental shift in government philosophy, especially when it comes to funding.

This is not an inexpensive proposition. This is a proposition that is literally going to have to pay for

hundreds or thousands of people if they are to be serviced in the manner this bill envisages. The money is going to have to be found. The support workers are going to have to be found. The training is going to have to be undertaken. The opportunities for families are going to have to suddenly materialize where they have not been found in the past.

I can't state because I don't know, and I think probably no one knows, not even the Premier or the finance minister at this point, whether or not there are going to be opportunities. But we have heard from the finance minister that he intends to make a fall economic statement in about another month, that he is going to come before this House and he is going to explain whether or not the province of Ontario is going to have the resources to continue with the programs that are extant. He is going to tell us at that point whether or not there will be monies or perceived monies for any other initiatives that this government might wish to undertake.

Last week, the Premier talked about another issue. He talked about poverty reduction and how it is his intention at this point to come out with a plan—which has been widely expected, which he promised to have within a year of the last election, which in a couple of weeks will be up—and that poverty plan will indicate the direction that the government is going to take over the course of the rest of its mandate. However, he also said something on this issue that was very chilling to me and I'm sure will be chilling to the families of people with developmental disabilities; that is, he is not sure that his poverty plan, in terms of implementation, will be able to take place in the current economic climate. I was not present today—I was here in the House for this debate and as well downstairs at a media conference—but it is reported to me that the Premier was in scrums this morning at the Royal Ontario Museum and he further elaborated on the statement that he made last week, that in fact there is not going to be money for the poverty plan this year. He further elaborated that it is the intention of the government by the end of the year to come up with a plan on poverty but that the implementation may have to wait for times of better economic certainty.

I say that because this is what is going to, I'm afraid, fall to those from Community Living and all of those who have such enormous hope that this legislation will in fact do something. As Mr. Pruessen so correctly identified back when the hearings were taking place, this plan, as well-meaning as it appears on paper, will not do what it is supposed to do and will not live up to the expectations of those in Community Living and the many other wonderful groups unless there are resources to go with it.

Having said that, we await the fall budget statement, and I think everyone should be watching this very carefully to see in fact whether this legislation will be any different than the legislation before. Because without the resources to go with it, it will be impossible to move forward; without the resources that the government needs to commit, the lofty-sounding words of the minister and the parliamentary assistant, quite frankly, cannot come to bear.

The second point that I want to talk about is the entire time of debate and listening to groups across the province and what transpired with the many ideas they had. I listened to my colleague briefly here and then further downstairs in my room in advance of me going to a press conference, and I listened to the frustrations that the Progressive Conservative members had sitting on this committee. I will reiterate: They deserve to be frustrated. They deserve to be frustrated because some 60 of their amendments that were put forward were voted down. I did not agree with all of their amendments and I voted against some of them as well. But certainly some of them had merit and I did support some of the amendments that they were trying to make, not in a way to delay the bill, not to be dilatory in any way, not in a way that would harm the bill or its grand scheme and its great future, but in a way I thought was intended to make it better. The government chose to vote every one of their amendments down. I'm not sure how participatory that was towards the Progressive Conservative members and I'm not sure how participatory it was towards the hundred or so deputants who came forward and who were the genesis of the ideas that I saw them try to put forward.

I would commend the government because they did listen to two of my amendments, and I would like to commend the government because I thought those two amendments were crucial to the success of the bill. I'd just like, if I could, for a couple of minutes, to talk about those two amendments and why I support the government on those two amendments for moving forward and how valuable they will be to the families and to those with developmental disabilities.

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The first one, and I think the most important one—or perhaps I'll deal with the least important or the less important one. It was a notice that will be put up in agencies so that people with developmental disabilities and their families will see what is expected of those agencies—a sort of code of conduct, if you will, that will be put on the walls so that people will know what to expect from the agency, will know what to do if they are not being treated properly, will know of the right of redress and the right of appeal, will know how to take the case further up the line. That will be posted prominently in all offices and all office spaces and will be available to all.

I think this is very important, and I know that in many social institutions, including public housing, you see these same framed documents put on the walls so that the residents who live in those agencies know that if they are not satisfied, they do have redress. I commend the government for including that amendment within the body of the bill.

The second one is the one that I think is more crucial, and quite frankly, it surprised me that the government okayed it, because it is highly unusual. Governments and ministers have the right to make regulations consistent with the passage of the bill. Very often, bills say next to nothing, and all of the meat of the bill, as it were, comes

down to regulation. What the government agreed to in the second motion that I put forward was heartening to me. It certainly showed the government's willingness to go slowly on this matter until people are satisfied with how the bill will unfold, their fears may be assuaged, and that is to allow the regulations to be posted for 45 days for public comment before they're actually implemented.

This is a huge step forward, not only in this bill, but I would hope in future bills as well. But in this bill particularly, it will allow people with developmental disabilities and their families and their caregivers and social agencies that care for them to take a good, hard look at what is going to happen, at how it's going to unfold and how people are going to be better looked after in terms of the bill itself. Those 45 days will be a time, I guess, of incubation, a time of thought, a time of reflection, so that those who are reading it can come forward to their members of provincial Parliament with any suggestions they may have. There could even possibly be further debate within this House to direct the minister if some of them appear to be onerous or unworkable.

So I would like to take this opportunity, because oftentimes in opposition you criticize government, and that of course is our role. But the government on these two issues at least has got it right. They have got it right by publishing in a prominent place people's rights to complain and to appeal, and they have got it right in terms of the regulation and allowing further public debate within the community that is so desperate to have that debate and really needs that debate.

There are a number of things, though, that I was not happy with—and I'm mindful of the time. Is this a good opportunity or should I continue?

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: One minute? Okay.

I don't know what I can say in one minute, other than to say that what I want to talk about on the next date is the whole issue of the preamble. I have to state for the record that I was disappointed that the motion made on the preamble did not carry. The preamble was requested by some 25 deputants over four cities. It was requested by many written papers that people wanted to see a preamble to the legislation, a preamble that is found in many pieces of legislation that the province has promulgated in the past, a preamble which would set out the rights and duties and obligations, that would allow families to understand how the act is to be interpreted, that would tell social service agencies precisely how they were going to deal with people with whom they work and that could be interpreted by the courts so that there could be no mistake.

The preamble that we set forward was a 12-point preamble, and I'm going to spend some time going through that. I have to state for the record, I was extremely disappointed when the government, who agreed with 11 of the 12 points, turned it down. Had they said, "We disagree with the 12th one," I would have gladly withdrawn it. I would gladly have withdrawn that 12th one, but that opportunity was not made available,

and a preamble is essential if this legislation is to be given the weight that is intended. I will continue on the next date. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for debate has ended.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a number of introductions this morning we would like to make.

On behalf of the member from Willowdale, a number of individuals from Professional Engineers Ontario are here today in the east members' gallery. We welcome Johnny Zuccon, Catherine Karakatanis, Walter Bilanski and Kim Allen.

On behalf of the member from York South-Weston—I just met these students downstairs—we'd like to welcome the grade 5 students from Roselands Junior Public School.

As well, on behalf of page Michael Hyer, we would like to welcome his mother, Margaret Wanlin, who is here in the public galleries today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MEMBER'S COMMENTS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Yesterday, the member from Wellington-Halton Hills raised a point of order with respect to a question asked by the member for Kitchener-Conestoga, and whether it amounted to a personal attack on another member of the House. It is true that Speakers have, on numerous occasions, implored members and will continue to implore members not to engage in personal attacks on each other. I have made that plea in the past and will continue to make that plea. By this, the Speaker is referring to remarks that question another member's honesty, integrity or character, or those that are personally offensive or accusatory.

I've had the opportunity to review the Hansard from yesterday, and I do not see that these comments made would fit that classification. Having said that, though, I remind all members that we are in an adversarial business. Temperate language and mutual respect will go a long way to making this the kind of debating chamber the people of the province expect it to be. Thank you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

C. DIFFICILE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is to the Premier. Premier, this past Monday, your health minister, outside this House, said that he supported the Prime Minister's commitment to call an inquiry into the listeriosis outbreak that has killed 17 people. Why, then,

will you not call an investigation—not an inquiry—into C. difficile, a deadly infectious disease that has killed more than 500 people in only 22 of Ontario's 157 hospitals? I ask you today, are you prepared to get to the root of the problem and then take swift, decisive and persistent action to ensure no future outbreaks and deaths?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question. I know that the issue of C. difficile has become something that has received greater prominence. It has been given a great deal of attention by the media, families are concerned about it, and it's only right that my colleague raises this issue.

To give you some sense of the challenge it presents, recently the Atlanta Centers for Disease Control confirmed that C. difficile played a role in 300,000 hospitalizations in the US, and about 5,500 deaths in 2005, which is more than double those numbers in 2000. So it is a real and pressing issue throughout North America.

We believe that we have taken the responsible path forward on this. We've asked an independent expert, Dr. Baker, to give us his best advice, and we intend to follow through on that advice by making information public beginning this Friday.

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Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Yes, Mr. Premier, it is a very, very serious and deadly infectious disease. However, other countries have taken decisive, swift and persistent action, which you and your government have not. Reporting is a critical first step, but it is not enough because this is only looking forward and not back at the root problem. We don't know how big the problem is. This isn't going to talk about how many deaths there are. You have a duty to protect the public in the province of Ontario. You've known since the deaths at Peterborough hospital in the fall of 2003, when 17 people died, that there is a problem. When SARS killed 44 people, you screamed for an inquiry, and there was one. We now know of at least 500 deaths, so I ask you today, will you finally commit to an investigation?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I can't agree with my colleague when she leaves the inference that we've done nothing. She will know that in 2004 we established the Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee; there have been three separate independent investigations; a coroner's jury has made recommendations; there's been an investigation into the Joseph Brant outbreak; and our own medical expert advisory committee has made recommendations.

Dr. Richard Schabas, the former Chief Medical Officer of Health for Ontario, said, "I'm not sure a public inquiry is necessarily the logical next step. They often make for good theatre but they don't get us where we need to go, which is to address this problem in a vigorous and effective way, and I think largely we already know what the underlying problems are with C. difficile."

That expert committee we established in 2004 has provided significant new advice to our hospitals. I know they're acting on that, and we look forward to making information public as of this writing.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I find it unbelievable that this Premier is so insensitive to the people behind the deaths, the people who died without dignity, the families who are demanding answers and the public that is concerned about this infectious disease which we know is only going to get worse. How can you in good conscience stand here today and deny that the deaths of over 500 people in your publicly funded institutions don't warrant an independent investigation? You are responsible for the hospitals. Surely you know that this is the right thing to do. Why are you stonewalling? Will you commit today to an investigation?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I can't help but agree with Dr. Richard Schabas and his advice.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: A good Liberal.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Shame on you. Apologize to Dr. Schabas.

Interjections.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: If the honourable member is looking for expert corroboration of Dr. Schabas's opinion, she should also know that the acting Chief Medical Officer of Health for Ontario and the associate deputy chief coroner have both said that further investigation would not offer anything new. We're going to act on the basis of the information received.

One of the things we've done—

Mr. Jim Wilson: Cover up.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We have 137 new—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the honourable member for Simcoe-Grey to withdraw his comment, please.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'm sorry.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The final point I'll make as we await the publication of that information to which we believe Ontarians are entitled is that we have hired 137 new infection control people working—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier. New question?

C. DIFFICILE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: To the Premier: It's obvious that the Premier is afraid of what he will find in the past. Premier, on September 15, your Minister of Health told the press that he expected death rates from C. difficile to drop once the infection rates are made public this week. He said that Quebec had a drop in the deaths once it required hospitals to start reporting its rates four years ago. What your minister is really saying is that in the last four years, the thousands of deaths of people who probably died from C. difficile could have been prevented if your government had only brought in mandatory reporting earlier, as Quebec did. Are you prepared to accept responsibility for these hundreds and thousands of deaths?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: First of all, my heart goes out to all the families which have been affected by the

pain and suffering associated with a death or even a sickness caused by C. difficile. It is something that hospitals throughout North America have been grappling with for a long time now. As I said just a moment ago, the Atlanta Centers for Disease Control says that they're looking at 300,000 cases on an annual basis in the United States of America.

Recently, the chief executive of the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology said in May of this year, "This is not a time for alarm, but more a time for educating health professionals to understand this particular pathogen." That is why our PIDAC committee, the Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee, has put in handwashing guidelines. It seems like a such a simple thing, but it is absolutely essential in preventing the spread of C. difficile.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: You refer to what's happening elsewhere in the world. I can tell you that the response in other parts of the world, in other provinces, in North America, has been much different than yours. They have acknowledged that they have a problem and they have taken swift, decisive and persistent action, unlike your government, who just turned a blind eye because you didn't want to deal with the consequences. It's now up to you to give Ontarians a complete picture and a complete plan of action. You can't go forward—you must know that—unless you know what happened in the past.

We're not asking for an inquiry; we're asking for an investigation. Let's look at the root problems, how widespread it is, and let's do what we can to reduce deaths and anything else related to C. difficile in the future.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I agree with the objective set out by my honourable colleague, but I think it's important that we look to, and rely on, the best experts in these matters. The experts that we hear from, both here in Ontario and from south of the border, indicate that we have a good understanding of C. difficile and the manner in which it is spread, and we need to be much more aggressive in terms of the kinds of guidelines that are in place and in the adoption of those guidelines by doctors and nurses working inside our hospitals. The next best thing that we can do, of course—the next thing that we could and must do—is to make information public about the incidents of C. difficile in our hospitals, and that's what we plan to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Without information about what has happened and what's going on, how can the public have confidence in your government as they move forward? Why won't you give the public the information that they're entitled to? What are you afraid of? They have the right to know. Harper's going to call the inquiry into listeriosis. You demanded the inquiry into SARS. It was provided. We have over 500 deaths in just a fraction of our hospitals and you refuse to take action. There are real people who have suffered—suffered and died

without any dignity in those hospital deaths. Will you, today, ensure that there is an investigation to get to the bottom of what happened in order that we don't repeat it in the future?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I share the objective laid out during the course of these questions by my honourable colleague, but I think it's important for us to rely on the best expert advice that we receive. That advice tells us that we have the information we need. We think one of the most important things that we can now do is make that information available to Ontario families.

I can also say that we're absolutely committed to patient safety, and we think that when you go into a hospital, when you put your mom or a sibling or some relation or a close friend in the hospital, you don't want them to get sick as a result of that experience in the hospital itself. We understand that, and we're going to do everything we can—working with experts, following their very best advice—to limit the incidents of C. difficile, something which is plaguing all hospitals in North America. We think that by making this information public we can go a long way to satisfying concerns.

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POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Premier. Our economy is in a tailspin. People are losing jobs, welfare rates are soaring, evictions from housing are up and food banks cannot keep up with the demand. Your response, as the leader of this province, has been to tell Ontarians that we need to go slow in addressing poverty, that we can't afford to fully tackle poverty at this time.

Several people living in poverty—Cheryl Duggan, Sharon McPherson, Ken MacLeod and Josephine Grey—are with us today in the gallery. Would the Premier please tell Cheryl, Ken, Sharon and Josephine why the implementation of a poverty strategy is no longer a priority of your government?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this issue, but I can't agree with the premise of my colleague's question. I'm proud to lead the first Ontario government which is making a deliberate and determined effort to reduce poverty, to measure poverty, to reduce it in a measurable way, and to do that by means of a focused strategy. The issue is not whether we do this; the issue is how quickly can we move on this. But we've done many other things in the interim, and I look forward to speaking to those in response to the supplemental questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: The Premier talks about a plan with no resources. The Premier's view is that nothing can or should be done to address poverty during economic downturns, and that flies in the face of experts and the lessons of history. Virtually every government in this province, save and except one in the 1995 period, did exactly what we think you should be doing, and that is increase spending on social programs to make sure that

the most vulnerable do not fall into the vicious cycle of poverty.

On this side we believe that governments have a moral and economic responsibility to help the vulnerable in difficult times. Has this government assessed the cost of social services, health care and the justice system that will be incurred if your government does not fully move ahead with poverty reduction?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My colleague makes a very good point, and I hope more and more of us, and Ontarians more broadly speaking, come to understand the connection between poverty, our failure to properly address that and the costs that will be incurred in other areas of government expenditures. He's absolutely right on that score. That's why we put in place an Ontario child benefit, with monthly benefits now flowing to families, supporting 1.3 million kids. That's why we've increased the minimum wage time and time again. It's why we've increased social assistance after it was frozen for so many years. It's why we're investing in affordable housing, a new dental program and enhancing our student nutrition program in our schools. We've doubled the funding for that. We understand it. We get the connection between investing in poverty and the corresponding reductions and expenditures elsewhere, and that's one of the things in part that has motivated us to keep doing these kinds of things.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: Since the Premier did not adequately answer the question about the cost of poverty, I'll try to give him some help. A 2007 report by a leading US economist found that the impact of child poverty in the United States costs that country \$500 billion a year. If you use the math and figure the number of people in Ontario, that would translate to about \$22 billion a year.

Would the Premier please explain why he is backing off on addressing poverty when doing so could reasonably be expected to cost this province \$22 billion in an already faltering Ontario economy?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I accept the premise of this particular question, which is that it's a matter of enlightened self-interest, both for our personal sake and the sake of our economy, that we find more ways, working together, to support families that are struggling in poverty.

There's something that I like to think is exciting taking place in the province of Ontario. It's being led by Minister Deb Matthews. We've been consulting Ontarians. At the end of this year, we want to put out a plan, the first of its kind in Ontario's history, that properly defines poverty, puts in place specific ways to measure it, puts in place specific targets, and puts in place a specific strategy for us to achieve those targets, together with regular accountability so people will know whether we're making success or not. That has never happened before. We're prepared to take this on. We understand there are some challenges associated with the economy, but we will move forward on this issue.

POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue: Again, back to the Premier. This government has said that it wants to hear from Ontarians about poverty. In fact, you held some roundtables across the province. You invited people to participate in those roundtables, or to submit letters and respond to your website survey. Thousands of Ontarians have made a great effort to have their voices heard. They trusted that you would take their views seriously. In fact, in the last election you promised to take it seriously and have a report within one year of that election. Why will you not commit today to release your comprehensive report on what you have heard—so many Ontarians know their views—and have taken into account in your scaled-back poverty plan?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I want to take this opportunity to thank the thousands and thousands of people across this province who participated in this poverty reduction consultation. From one end of the province to the other, people living in poverty, people in the business community and the faith communities and social services—the whole province got together and started talking about solutions. I want to take this opportunity to say thank you to the members from all sides of the House who convened groups in their ridings to start to talk constructively about poverty reduction. It has been an extraordinary process. We are working very hard to meet the deadline and to report back by the end of the year.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Prue: Back to the minister: I have a difficult time understanding why this government refuses to publicly report on what they have heard from Ontarians about poverty. You promised it within a year, and now you're talking about the end of the year and possibly next year. Perhaps the plan does not address most of Ontarians' concerns. You cannot hide this from Ontarians. Poverty Watch Ontario has reported on government and community consultations. The 25 in 5: Network for Poverty Reduction—145 organizations—has issued a report. And today we have filed our own report in the timeline that we promised to do: when the Legislature returned. We listened to over 400 people. All of these reports call for the same things: a poverty-proof minimum wage, social assistance rates that cover basic needs, and an adequate supply of affordable housing. Why won't this government listen to the voices of low-income people and move ahead now?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have to say I am a bit confused. Our commitment was to report by the end of the year and we are on track to do that. As I said, we have heard from thousands of people. We have reviewed hundreds of submissions. We are working very hard to actually develop the strategy that will be complete by the end of the year. I look forward to a fulsome discussion at that time.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Michael Prue: This government has resources and should have done this a long time ago. If our little party can do it, then you should be able to do it with the legion of people that work for you. Ontarians are demanding the following: a minimum wage of \$10.25 an hour—now. They are demanding a full Ontario child benefit—now. They are demanding an expert committee to ensure that social assistance rates cover basic costs of living—now. They are demanding a commitment of 7,000 new units of affordable housing a year—now. Why won't this government admit that inaction solves nothing, and go forward with these plans immediately? The people are hungry. The people are in need.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's only fair to acknowledge that actually developing a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy is much more than just compiling a list of suggestions that people have made. We are working very hard to create a fair, balanced and aggressive—but doable—poverty reduction strategy that will create opportunities for people, that will break the cycle of poverty, that will make sure that every child in this province has the opportunity to be the very best they can be regardless of the income of their parents.

The Speaker: New question. The leader of the official opposition.

YOUTH CRIME

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is for the Attorney General. Yesterday the member for Whitby—Oshawa asked the minister a serious question regarding Prime Minister Harper's proposals to strengthen the Youth Criminal Justice Act in the face of an alarming number of violent crimes being committed by young offenders. Victims' groups and others have lauded the proposals, yet you chose to attack the questioner and dump all over the announcement.

In the midst of a violent youth crime wave, Minister, why are you playing politics with this issue?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The Leader of the Opposition asks a question about a Conservative platform in the federal election, and he talks about politics. Well, let's talk about the crime prevention agenda that will keep Ontarians safe.

Number one, live up to your promise, Mr. Harper, to put 2,500 police officers on the streets of Canada. You're only 40% there, and then for five years. What do you want us to do? Fire them after five years? What about a ban on handguns across this country? Why won't you take the guns out of the hands of those who misuse them? What are you trying to train, a province full of Olympic target shooters? I think it's time you got serious with the issues that affect Ontarians. I think it's time you stood up for all Ontarians and helped us keep our communities safe.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: That act in the face of an unprecedented number of shootings by youth in Toronto

in the last two weeks: The Attorney General's attitude and approach is an insult to all Ontarians, but especially victims of crime. Listen to victims.

Joe Wamback of the Canadian Crime Victims Foundation: "Harper's plan sends a strong message to violent young offenders that there's consequences to their actions." Moonie Ali, a director of Toronto Crime Stoppers: "Let Chris Bentley put himself in my position. If he was a father directly impacted by crime, he would not be against these changes."

Will the Attorney General stop playing politics like he did in his first response with this critically important public issue?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The Leader of the Opposition sees a future in which he will continually be speaking to victims of crime; I see a future in which there are no victims of crime because we keep our communities safe. I see a future where we support the work we've always undertaken to put more police officers on the streets. Why won't he stand up for the people of Ontario and get Harper to put more police officers on the streets?

I see a future in which we support the work of the guns and gangs task force. Why won't he support the work of the guns and gangs task force? I support the work of Chief Blair, Chief Faulkner, Chief Davidson, the chiefs of the province of Ontario, who are working hard every single day to keep our communities safe.

Why won't the Leader of the Opposition and the Conservatives stand up for the police officers who stand up for Ontarians? It's time you stood up for the people of this province.

CHILD POVERTY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. When 12.6% of Ontario's children—345,000 of our youngsters—live below the poverty line, when child poverty has increased 2.3% over the past five years in good economic times in this province, how is it that the McGuinty government can abandon the issue of child poverty reduction?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would just say I'm a bit nonplussed by this question given that this past July the first Ontario child benefit cheques started to be delivered to families across the province. It's a benefit of \$600 per child per family, and that's going to grow until it reaches \$1,100 per child per year.

We are making a measurable difference in child poverty right now, but we are saying that's not enough. That is why we are developing a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy that will ensure every child has the opportunity to be the very best they can be.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Back to the Premier: This government knows darned well that their child benefit does not replace the national child benefit clawback that they took away from kids for so many years, and they've also taken back the back-to-school allowance, as well as

the winter clothing allowance. You know darned well that families are suffering as a result of the failed policies of this government.

We had ministers trotting around the province all summer long pretending that there's a plan in the works, that it's imminent, that child poverty reduction is going to be coming soon and that these stakeholders that they've been talking to are going to see a real plan be implemented. Here today we know that that's not the case. How is it that this government can now turn to the plea of their own poverty and go back on the fight on child poverty that they were committed to for so many years? It's all just a sham, and this government knows very well that they're not doing what they need to do to take care of those 345,000 children living in poverty, whose futures are being devastated by this government.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm going to take this opportunity to talk a little bit about the Ontario child benefit. I think it's very important that every member of this House understand that the Ontario child benefit is different from anything we've ever done in Ontario, because for the first time we are supporting families where the parents work. For the first time, families who are working very hard to support their kids are getting a little bit more than they would have had before. But we're not turning our back on social assistance, and I think it's very important that the member opposite actually get her facts right. A single mom, for example, with two kids, on social assistance has had an increase in income of 27% since we were elected. That's made up of the end of the clawback to the NCBS, increases in social assistance, federal investments that were not clawed back. We've made important strides, but we have still got work to do, and that is in fact why we are developing the strategy.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. In February of this year, the OPP completed the largest co-ordinated child pornography investigation in the history of Ontario: 22 individuals were arrested, and our province took another step towards ending the exploitation of children. When asked about the groundbreaking investigation, Commissioner Fantino said, "Today is a great day for children and communities right across the province. The exploitation of children—by whatever means—is appalling...."

I agree strongly with Commissioner Fantino. This is good news for my family, for my constituents and for all of Ontario. I'd like the minister to tell us what this government is doing to ensure that this is the first of many such investigations and that we continue to be successful in fighting child pornography and bringing these criminals to justice.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to thank the member for the question.

Certainly I believe the people of Ontario and this government agree with Commissioner Fantino that the

exploitation of children is always appalling. The OPP has done a terrific job, and I can tell the member with confidence that with the support of the McGuinty government, the OPP will continue to have success in fighting the spread of child pornography.

Of the 1,000 new officers this government has put on the streets, 60 officers have been designated to fight the sexual exploitation of children on the Internet. Our government has increased funding to the OPP's child pornography section by a full 70%, and that has translated into 162 child pornography charges laid by the OPP last year against 54 people and 336 new investigations launched. We will continue to be diligent and committed to eradicating child pornography.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I'm very pleased to hear that the minister is so serious about continuing this fight. I'm also concerned, however, about the success of our efforts to rehabilitate sex offenders and to ensure that our communities are safe when they are released back into society. I know that as a result of the Auditor General's recent report, our government introduced amendments to Christopher's Law and that Bill 16 received royal assent on April 27.

Can the minister tell the Legislature what our government is doing to ensure that sex offenders are receiving adequate rehabilitation, and can he assure us that our children are safe from past offenders?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: The member is right to raise the issue. I'm proud of this government's record, and I can assure her that we are committed to providing offenders with training, intervention and treatment programs, as well as related services, to assist them in becoming law-abiding citizens.

As examples, this government has provided \$700,000 to the Toronto Police Service for a pilot project to establish and maintain maximum compliance and effective management of sex offenders. We also reversed the decision by the previous government to close the Ontario Correctional Institute, Ontario's best treatment centre for violent and sexual offenders. And finally, as mentioned by the member, I am very proud of our sex offender registry, which today has a 95% compliance rate. Offenders who do not register are subject to police investigations and, if appropriate, charged and prosecuted. Public safety will continue to be the cornerstone of our—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. New question.

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TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Minister of Finance: Last week, John Tory and the Ontario PC caucus hosted an economic summit to hear directly from economists, business leaders and other concerned groups and individuals. We heard that Dalton McGuinty's tax hikes mean that Ontario's current tax structure is chasing well-paying jobs from the province of Ontario. In fact, Roger Martin, the dean of the Rotman School of

Management, a special adviser to Premier McGuinty, said that Ontario has one of the highest marginal tax burdens on business investment in the world.

Minister, your policies are hurting families by chasing away good job opportunities and raising expenses. I ask you, will you immediately table an economic statement where you'll commit to lowering the tax burden and help create well-paying jobs in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This morning, I had the opportunity to meet with 21 business leaders, three times as many as the Tory leader, to talk about all of these issues. I just remind the member what the head of our chamber of commerce said:

"The provincial government has decided to take a prudent approach. By the elimination of the capital tax, we think it is something that is going to be very positive. The cost allowance will help bring some money back into the pockets of companies."

We have a balanced approach. We have been consulting. We will have a fall statement in mid-to-late October. This follows up on a number of other—I remind the member that's per the financial transparency and accountability act, which he voted against, and we had to bring that in because even though they said they had a balanced budget, they had a deficit of \$5.6 billion. That's according to the former Provincial Auditor. Our balanced five-point plan is the right plan for Ontario at this time. We will continue to work with the business community—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: If the minister heard from the same economists that we did, he would have heard that Canada, and Ontario in Canada, is now predicted to be dead last in economic growth, thanks to Dalton McGuinty's tax-and-spend policies. He would have heard that a record number of talented Ontarians have left our province to find jobs in other provinces right across Canada. He would have heard directly that some 200,000-plus well-paying manufacturing jobs have now left the province of Ontario, thanks to Dalton McGuinty's tax-and-spend policies. I think the minister will know as well that through his work at the C. D. Howe Institute, Jack Mintz recently showed that a 1% reduction in the Ontario corporate income tax rate would actually increase provincial tax revenues by up to 18%.

Minister, you did the opposite. You raised business taxes now that we have the least competitive tax structure in the world, and revenues have not kept pace. Will you now commit to lowering the tax burden to help create more economic opportunity for families in Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We simply don't agree with the member, and just to reinforce, we don't agree with Mr. Mintz either. The fact of the matter is, Ontario's corporate taxes are very competitive, with \$3 billion in tax cuts. Those tax cuts in the US haven't been working. We have a balanced five-point plan that's providing \$3 billion in immediate tax relief to all corporations. Your plan wouldn't help the manufacturing sector. With

respect, you have to be making money to reduce corporate taxes. Our taxes were the ones that were recommended to us by Ontario businesses, not by Alberta academics. It's the right plan.

We also have to invest in skilled trades. That's what the business leaders told me this morning. We have to prepare for the economy of the 21st century. That old neo-conservative attitude didn't work. We have a plan that's going to rebuild this economy, working with business, working with labour, to ensure that Ontario continues to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. Since July 2004, Statistics Canada reported that Ontario has lost 235,000 manufacturing jobs and almost 45,000 direct and indirect forestry jobs. Because of EI cuts by the Chrétien-Martin Liberal government of the mid-1990s, many of these unemployed workers do not qualify for EI and are ending up on Ontario Works rolls, living far below the poverty line.

Will the Premier admit that his economic policies have failed to protect good-paying manufacturing jobs in this province and that the economic devastation of the McGuinty years is resulting in rising poverty rates in Ontario's manufacturing and resource communities?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This government has worked actively to assist those families and workers in the sectors that are challenged and we will continue to make those investments, whether it's investments in skills training, which you, sir, voted against; whether or not it's incentives to encourage investment to create jobs, which you, sir, voted against.

I would remind the member opposite that in spite of the challenges, particularly in the manufacturing and automotive sector which are very real and very front and centre for this government, we're seeing growth in other sectors. We have seen a net increase in jobs, a net increase in real wages, a 1.7% increase in employment year over year. We recognize the challenges. We're making the investments that are essential to protect families. We do need a federal partner that will address the discrepancy in employment insurance, and I hope the member will stand up with us for Ontario to ensure fairness for Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Paul Miller: Fine words from the minister—it's too bad your federal cousins don't share your concern. Almost all experts agree that it is the huge increase in qualifying hours brought in by the federal Liberal government in the mid 1990s that is responsible for the fact that in a city such as Toronto, 25% of unemployed qualify for EI benefits—less than 25%. And yet, in the recently released platform, there is not a word about reducing these outrageous qualifying times.

Will the Premier admit that not only have his economic policies failed the people of Ontario, but also that his federal Liberal cousins are as indifferent to the plight of unemployed Ontarians as is he?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Premier McGuinty has launched a fairness for Ontario initiative. People can go to fairness.ca to see it. There is no question—and our policy is not to be partisan; our policy is to deal with Ontario's challenges.

The member may want to get up and have a partisan debate about this. We want to get up and say to all the federal political parties that it's time to change the employment insurance rules, that an unemployed auto worker in my community should not get \$4,800 a year less than an unemployed worker in other parts of the country.

Sir, we're less interested in the gamesmanship than we are in dealing with the problem. I'd invite you to sign the petition. I'd invite you to ask your federal counterparts to stand up for Ontario, to support our initiative of fairness for all Ontario workers relative to their counterparts in other parts of the country.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question.

TOURISM

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Tourism. The economy is on everyone's mind. We read about the challenges faced by various industries daily. The tourism industry is no different. It has its own set of economic challenges which impact the province and this city. The weather was poor this summer. High gas prices encouraged people to stay at home. Fewer US travellers are visiting Ontario because of the high Canadian dollar. In Willowdale, for instance, Novotel, Gibson House and Mel Lastman Square are well-known tourist attractions. They're feeling the pinch in the tourism economy.

What is this government doing to assist the tourism business in Willowdale, in the GTA and, indeed, throughout the province?

Interjection.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'd like to thank the member for Willowdale for the question, as well as the input from the member from Trinity-Spadina; it's always helpful. As the member for Willowdale noted, Canada's tourism sector, including Ontario, has faced numerous challenges over the past few years. We have not been immune. At the same time, our government has recognized that there are opportunities to be found within the industry.

We're working closely with our tourism partners on a plan for tourism. Since 2006 we've invested \$14.5 million, new dollars to enhance Ontario's festivals and events. We've heard great success stories from across the province, including the Art of Being Green, a Celebrate Ontario festival in the township of Lanark Highlands, which had a 64% increase this year in attendance. And of course, Voyageur Days in Mattawa, which sold out

weeks in advance with the help of the tourism event marketing program partnership.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. David Zimmer: The minister has addressed factors that are challenging to the tourism industry, both in Canada and in the province. In particular, the minister has referred to a competitiveness study that will address the concerns of the tourism industry and outline a plan for the direction and repositioning of tourism in the future here in Ontario. Minister, I want to know more about that study. I've received a lot of questions from my constituents regarding what our government is doing right now to promote tourism in the city of Toronto. Does the minister have a plan to help the tourism industry while we await the release of the report? Time is of the essence here, Minister.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: In addition to the funding that we have given to our events and festivals, there is, of course, the campaign, There's No Place Like This, which has seen a 5% increase in domestic tourism in the province and is a great success. As well, you referred to a competitiveness study in the tourism industry which has been undertaken and chaired by the member for Vaughan, Greg Sorbara, who is travelling the province and is consulting with a wide range of Ontario's traditional and non-traditional tourism partners. He's looking at the successes of the Ontario industry, as well as the opportunities we can look at in the future. Today, I believe he's in Kingston and, of course, he's having a second session in Toronto that I'm sure the member is aware of. I'd encourage all members of the House to attend the consultations in their region and offer their input and suggestions together with their constituents.

We'll continue to work closely with our partners to provide stimulus for the tourism industry right now, while laying the foundation for innovation and long-term growth.

CLASS SIZE

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, as you clearly stated for the record yesterday, you look forward to responding to questions from the opposition. I too look forward to your thoughtful answers. Time and time again we have heard how the Minister of Education defers decisions to be made to the local school boards. This statement is usually made when the water gets too hot for you to wade into.

My question, Minister, is why are you refusing to be flexible with school boards on the issue of size caps?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: In 2003, when we came into office, there was a real concern—and I know, because I was a parent-advocate and I was a trustee—about class sizes. There were primary class sizes, there were upwards of 30 kids; there were kindergarten classes that had that same number. It just was unacceptable. There had been a long history of averages across boards

and parents were saying it wasn't good enough, because you can have an average which means you've got 38 in one part of the board and you've got 10 in another part of the board, and it does nothing for an individual classroom. So what we did is put class size caps in place and we have funded them. Across the province we're at 88.4% of classes at 20 students or fewer in kindergarten to grade 3. We also introduced some flexibility so that 10% of classes within a board can be above that, to 23. Some boards implemented those caps right away; other boards have waited to do that and they're—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I had hopes for a thoughtful response but what I think I've had here instead is the usual platitudes, the reinvestments and the all the photo ops that go with them. Unfortunately, that answer is not sufficient for me and it certainly isn't sufficient for the parents who are here today. These parents from Homewood Community School are here today in search of a solution from the ministry.

Ms. Rushowy hit the nail on the head today in the newspaper where she is quoted as saying, "There is no wiggle room for boards and it is more a case of moving children to fit the policy instead of looking at their best interests."

Minister, please explain how disrupting the learning environment of an entire school for the sake of a slight overage in classroom size will help our students learn and succeed.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the name of the school is Humewood, and in fact I spoke to one of the parent leaders last night on the phone. I explained the situation, and what I said to them was this: If we introduce a cap into the system, and then we say there's local flexibility, then there is no longer a cap. What parents expect is that when they bring their three- or four-year-old—because some of the junior kindergarten kids are three—when they bring those little kids to school, they expect that that class size is not going to be more than 20, or at the very most, it's going to be 23. So local flexibility actually doesn't work. I had that conversation with one of the parents from Humewood last night. What I said was the Toronto District School Board needs to bring its classes into compliance with this cap. They know: They were at 78% compliance last year; they have said to us that they categorically will be in full compliance, which is 90% at the cap and 10% up to 23—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Mines. Minister, you'll know that First Nations are the most impoverished communities in our province and that we need to do something in order to stimulate economic activity to give the people of those communities an opportunity for a better future. Your government cur-

rently is going through a process of Mining Act reform consultations, and First Nations are saying to you, as they're saying to me, and as they're saying to our leader, Howard Hampton, that your process is too rushed, that they need the time to consult with their communities to get this right.

My question to you is simply this: Are you prepared to accept the recommendation by Nishnawbe Aski Nation to give them the necessary time to consult their communities so we can get this right?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I appreciate the question. It's somewhat ironic coming from a party whose leader said this summer that there was no need for consultations whatsoever. It was an extraordinary quote to hear, and you and I have discussed that ourselves, I say to the member from Timmins-James Bay.

Having said that, we take the consultation process extremely seriously. We're working very closely with our First Nation partners. We're doing very targeted consultations with each community. In fact, we've got community consultations that are going on as we speak, and we're trying to organize getting them together. We are working with not just NAN but with Matawa and other organizations to try and meet their needs in terms of the consultation process. We take it very, very seriously; it's something that obviously we do and perhaps your party doesn't, once again in light of the fact that your leader made it clear he didn't think consultations were necessary in the first place. Regardless, we're working closely with them, and we will continue that. We look for their advice.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, Minister, you're not working closely with them, because they're calling me and others to say that you're trying to rush them through a process of consultation that is designed by Queen's Park, by the bureaucrats, that basically doesn't take into account what the realities are in First Nations communities. These are impoverished communities. These are communities where people are struggling to make ends meet. These are fly-in communities; we don't have roads. These are communities where most people don't have computers because they cannot afford to buy one or get the Internet in their community. So they're saying that you're trying to rush them down a path of consultation that in the end will not give them the opportunity to do what needs to be done.

I ask you again: Are you going to take the time to make this right as far as consultation? Or are you going to force them through a process that at the end of the day is just going to lead to more conflict and the slowing down of projects in their communities?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Again, I ask the member whether or not that's the position of your party in light of what Mr. Hampton said earlier.

What I can tell you is that I certainly have been working closely with the First Nations in this regard. I'm very aware of the fact that they also are looking for clarity and certainty. We are working very closely trying to provide the consultation environment that they're looking for.

We spent a significant amount of time before the consultations began this summer, in our consultation document we put forward about a year and a half ago, on making the conditions absolutely the way that they should be. Indeed, we are going to continue to work with our First Nation partners on this. We know that the consultation process is very important. We very much want to meet our duty to consult, and the fact is we will continue our consultation process but recognizing that both the mining sector and the First Nations have made it clear to me that they need clarity and certainty. It's important that whatever changes go through, the legislation happens relatively soon.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister, my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex is very diverse agriculturally, and my constituents have been telling me that they're very interested in buying more of the great fresh food that's produced in Ontario by our local farmers.

As everyone knows, buying local is a great way to help local farmers promote their local economy while at the same time protecting the environment through greenhouse gas reductions resulting from shorter distances that the food products have to travel. We know that a strategy to promote Ontario food helps drive local sales and all the benefits that go along with that, including stronger farming and food production industries and a healthier rural economy.

Minister, could you tell this House what our government is doing to promote Ontario foods and encourage Ontarians to buy locally?

1140

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I want to thank the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex for the excellent question. She is a tireless advocate for the agriculture industry and her constituents.

She is very right that the people of Ontario are eager to get on the Buy Ontario/Pick Ontario Freshness initiative. That is why our government wants to partner with them. We want to promote Ontario food products, because they are the safest and the best quality of anywhere in the world. That is why in our last budget, the Minister of Finance announced that we are committing \$56 million over the next four years for our Pick Ontario Freshness strategy. That's on top of the \$12.5 million that we committed in the previous budget—so, \$68.5 million. I believe that it has been very effective and I'd be happy to tell the House, in the supplementary, of some of the examples.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: Thank you, Minister, for that reply. I know the farmers in my riding appreciate the Pick Ontario Freshness strategy, as it aims to open up the local markets for them and helps them to get a better

return on the hard work and resources they put into their products. They're counting on a successful strategy.

Bringing together local people from industry, the commercial sector and the community increases the bottom lines for local businesses and the quality of life for everyone. We know that everyone has a role to play: government, industry stakeholders, producers, processors, retailers and consumers.

I've seen our transit ads in the buses, the streetcars and the subway trains. I've also noticed our television commercials have really resonated. The catchy "Good things grow in Ontario" jingle is on the minds and in the hearts of viewers across the province. I think you, as the minister, set a record—or made history—at the AMO conference when you sang that jingle during the ministers' forum.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Speaker, I think she was going to ask me to sing the jingle but I'm not going to do that. I am, however, very happy to add to my initial comments that we've also partnered with the industry. We have announced a \$12-million, four-year Ontario market investment fund. This is a partnership with producers and processors to help them market their local products.

Also, I want to tell you about some major retailers who have caught the wave to develop a "buy local" strategy. Sobeys has introduced a Compliments label for Ontario beef, pork and chicken. The packaging contains Foodland Ontario logos and the products are being promoted in Sobeys' weekly flyers. Also, Loblaws has recently launched their Grown Close to Home campaign. Loblaws is also currently offering Ontario corn-fed beef products.

These are examples where, because the consumers are demanding—they're preferring—Ontario products, the major retailers are also getting on board.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, do you believe that individuals with disabilities deserve the same rights as all citizens of Ontario?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you very much. That's an excellent question. Yes, we do believe that. That's why we have introduced this new bill, Bill 77, which favours full inclusion of people with developmental disabilities.

In the past, we thought that these people should be in institutions, and that they should be put there for different reasons but also to exclude them from the community. With Bill 77, we have listened to the families, to our partners in the community, and we have moved forward with a new piece of legislation that will favour full integration of those with developmental disabilities.

I thank all of those who participated in the consultation and gave us their best advice in what we should—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pretty sure I asked a yes-or-no question, but I guess that's Liberal politics in Ontario.

Minister, why are you allowing, in Bill 77, government inspectors to enter homes without consent and without a warrant if you believe individuals who have developmental disabilities should be afforded the same rights as all Ontario citizens?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Indeed, a very good question. That's exactly why we are moving forward with entering into these homes to do investigations when we have a reasonable reason to believe that something is happening there. That's why we want to give full protection to those with developmental disabilities, not like you, protecting other interests. For us, Bill 77 is to fully protect and defend those with developmental disabilities. Those suggestions were from the parents and from those who have family members with developmental disabilities. They want to be their advocates. We have been listening to parents. We are not listening to those like you who want to keep us out of these homes. We're doing exactly what we're doing in long-term care.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. As the minister is well aware, low-income grandparents raising their grandchildren have been cut off from the little assistance they receive through the ministry's Ontario Works temporary care assistance plan.

Back on June 9, the minister said, "This temporary care assistance is short-term. It says so; it's temporary care assistance." I have news for the minister: It doesn't say so. Her ministry policy directives read: "Assistance is intended to be available to children under 18 for as long as they require care ... no time limits are set out in the availability of temporary care assistance." When will this minister get with the program and enforce her own rules?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I appreciate the question. The member of the third party is a very strong supporter and defender of these grandparents. I take this opportunity to thank them for the good service that they are offering.

These grandparents believe that they have a responsibility towards their grandchildren who are in a situation where they need protection. That's why we have this temporary care assistance program, which provides grandparents with financial support. This has nothing to do with the financial capacity of the grandparents. It's a program that has been in existence for quite some time. As part of this poverty review, we will also review this program.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just want to take this opportunity to welcome some students from

Claireville Junior School in Etobicoke North. I had the opportunity to talk to you outside and I'm glad that you had the chance to get in to question period and see the end of it. On behalf of all the members, welcome to Queen's Park.

PETITIONS

CLASS SIZE

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I would like to present this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas smaller class sizes provide a benefit for students; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Education has established a cap of 20 students per primary class;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"We do not support the Ministry of Education's cap of 20 students per primary class without consideration for local circumstances, and request the consideration of the Minister of Education in this matter."

I agree with this petition, I am signing it and I'm pleased to hand it to page Paige.

PROTECTION FOR MINERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition prepared by the family of Lyle Everett Defoe and supported by the people of northern Ontario.

"Whereas the current legislation contained in the Ontario health and safety act and regulations for mines and mining plants does not adequately protect the lives of miners, we request revisions to the act;

"Lyle Everett Defoe and the scoop tram he was operating fell 150 feet down an open stope (July 23, 2007). Lyle was 25 years and 15 days old when he was killed at Xstrata Kidd Creek mine site, Timmins.

1150

"Section R-60" of the act "states that 'A shaft, raise or other opening in an underground mine shall be securely fenced, covered or otherwise guarded....' The stope where Lyle was killed was protected by a length of orange plastic snow fence and a rope with a warning sign. These barriers would not have been visible if the bucket of the scoop tram was raised. Lyle's body was recovered from behind the scoop tram."

They petition the Ontario Legislative Assembly as follows:

"Concrete berms must be mandatory to protect all open stopes and raises;

"All miners and contractors working underground must have working communication devices and personal locators;

"All equipment involved in injuries and fatalities must be recovered and examined unless such recovery would endanger the lives of others; and

"The entire act must be reviewed and amended to better protect underground workers."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it with page Marissa.

GUN CONTROL

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'm very pleased to present a petition today from the residents of the riding of Scarborough Southwest.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas access to guns is a major cause behind an increase in violent crime;

"Whereas such crime has been steadily increasing over" the last "number of years;

"Whereas current preventative initiatives have been put in place to stem the tide of violent crime but a direct approach targeting gun usage has not been undertaken;

"Whereas signs specifically stating a zero tolerance attitude toward gun use in the commission of gun violence need to be created and erected to demonstrate our collective disdain for this type of activity;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Public Safety to implement an initiative to construct a zero tolerance gun usage sign and have these signs placed on all province of Ontario property, such as major roads and buildings."

I will attach my signature to it and give it to page Connor.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition prepared by the Ontario Health Coalition and signed by the people of Guelph.

"Whereas understaffing in Ontario's nursing homes is a serious problem resulting in inadequate care for residents and unsafe conditions for staff;

"Whereas after the Harris government removed the regulations providing minimum care levels in 1995, hours of care dropped below the previous 2.25 hour/day minimum;

"Whereas the recent improvements in hours of care are not adequate, vary widely and are not held to accountable standards;

"Whereas there is currently nothing in legislation to protect residents and staff from renewed cuts to care levels by future governments; and

"Whereas care needs have measurably increased with aging and the movement of people with more complex health needs from hospitals into long-term-care homes;"

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately enact and fund an average care standard of 3.5 hours per resident per day in the regulations under the new Long-Term Care Homes Act."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it with Scarlett.

GARDE D'ENFANTS

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I have a petition from Suzanne Huppé de St. Albert, concernant la réforme du droit de l'enfance.

« À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Nous, citoyens de la province de l'Ontario, méritons et avons le droit de demander des modifications à la Loi portant réforme du droit de l'enfance, de façon à faire valoir l'importance des relations qu'ont les enfants avec leurs père et mère, ainsi qu'avec leurs grands-parents, comme le prévoit le projet de loi 33, 2008, présenté par le député provincial Kim Craitor.

« Attendu que le paragraphe 20(2.1) de la Loi exige que les père et mère et autres personnes qui ont la garde d'enfants ne doivent pas faire déraisonnablement obstacle aux relations personnelles qui existent entre les enfants et leurs grands-parents;...

« Attendu que le paragraphe 24(2.2) de la Loi exige qu'un tribunal qui décide de la garde d'un enfant prenne en compte la volonté de chaque personne qui demande, par requête, la garde de l'enfant de faciliter les contacts entre celui-ci et ses père et mère ainsi que ses grands-parents, compte tenu de l'intérêt véritable de l'enfant;

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Que les députés de l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario adoptent le projet de loi 33, 2008, qui modifie la Loi portant réforme du droit de l'enfance, de façon à faire valoir l'importance des relations qu'ont les enfants avec leurs père et mère ainsi qu'avec leurs grands-parents. »

PROTECTION FOR MINERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition prepared by the family of Lyle Everett Defoe, and signed by the people of White River.

"Whereas the current legislation contained in the Ontario Health and Safety Act and Regulations for Mines and Mining Plants does not adequately protect the lives of miners, we request revisions to the act;

"Lyle Everett Defoe and the scoop tram he was operating fell 150 feet down an open stope (July 23, 2007). Lyle was 25 years and 15 days old when he was killed at Xstrata Kidd Creek mine site, Timmins."

The act states: "A shaft, raise or other opening in an underground mine shall be securely fenced, covered or otherwise guarded...." The stope where Lyle was killed was protected by a length of orange plastic snow fence and a rope with a warning sign. These barriers would not have been visible if the bucket of the scoop tram was raised. Lyle's body was recovered from behind the scoop tram."

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Concrete berms must be mandatory to protect all open stopes and raises;

"All miners and contractors working underground must have working communication devices and personal locators;

"All equipment involved in injuries and fatalities must be recovered and examined unless such recovery would endanger the lives of others; and

"The entire act must be reviewed and amended to better protect underground workers."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it with page Asha.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Joe Dickson: A petition for the preservation of the Ajax-Pickering hospital.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Rouge Valley Health board reversed the 2006 announcement closing the maternity and pediatric services at the Ajax-Pickering hospital due to an overwhelming public outcry; and

"Whereas the Rouge Valley Health board of directors has recently approved closing the 20-bed mental health patient unit at the Ajax-Pickering hospital; and

"Whereas there remains further concern by residents for future maternity/pediatric closings, particularly with the new birthing unit at Centenary hospital, and even with the Ontario Ministry of Health's largest-ever expansion of the Ajax-Pickering hospital; and

"Whereas there is a natural boundary, the Rouge Valley, that clearly separates the two distinct areas of Scarborough and Durham region;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Central East Local Health Integration Network (CE-LHIN) and the Rouge Valley Health System (RVHS) board of directors review the Rouge Valley Health System makeup and group Scarborough Centenary hospital with the three other Scarborough hospitals; and

"Further, that we position Ajax-Pickering hospital within Lakeridge Health, thus combining all of our hospitals in Durham region under one Durham region administration."

And I will affix my signature to these and pass it to page Marissa.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition here from Dr. Munir Jamal. It is signed by many of his patients, and he is a urologist practising in Mississauga. It read as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the

ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and to enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition and to ask page Elizabeth to carry it for me.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jeff Leal: I received a petition today from a Josh Lane, who resides at 30 Hanson Road in Mississauga, Ontario:

"Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I will give this to page Connor again, and I'll affix my signature to it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It appears there are no more petitions to be presented today.

This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.
The House recessed from 1201 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CASH ROLLS OF CANADA

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yesterday, I raised concerns about a Guelph company called Cash Rolls. Cash Rolls

recently moved their manufacturing division to the United States of America because Ministry of Labour inspectors here in Ontario refused to work with this company to bring them into compliance with new regulations, and instead forced them to immediately shut down operations.

I was shocked to learn yesterday that public servants from the Ministry of Labour were calling around to media outlets, demanding that they pull the story about Cash Rolls because of "factual errors." This is a disgraceful attempt by this government to muzzle the media and divert attention from this government's shameful record when it comes to our struggling economy.

The ministry felt our press release wasn't clear enough in specifying that it was the "manufacturing" division of Cash Rolls that had been shut down and moved to the States. That was the huge factual error they found and used as an excuse for their attempt to silence the media. Regardless of this bureaucratic nitpicking, there are still 11 local jobs and over \$1 million lost to the Ontario economy because of excessive government red tape.

If it's not enough that the Ministry of Labour inspectors are forcing businesses to close, they are now attempting to strong-arm the media when there's a story and their goon-like tactics are made public.

It makes me wonder if the minister directed these senior bureaucrats to do his dirty work and try to shut down this story, just as they have effectively shut down this business.

How many other stories have we not seen because of this same type of behaviour, and when will the labour ministry and this McGuinty government stop acting like a bully toward businesses and reporters alike?

ARTHRITIS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to speak about the issue of arthritis in the province of Ontario. You will know that in Canada in general, and in Ontario, about one in six or one in five Ontarians suffer from various types of arthritis. There are about a hundred different types.

I want to give my story. Members would have seen me drag myself into this House last spring, using a cane, having a difficult time walking, always thinking I had a physical injury. It wasn't until such time as I had a chat with my daughter, who is a nurse practitioner and who noticed that I had a rash on my leg, that my condition was in fact identified as psoriatic arthritis.

I want to say this, because it is an issue in this province that not enough people know what this condition is, and if not treated, as many people in this chamber will know, the condition can worsen. Luckily for me, my daughter is a nurse practitioner, and luckily for me, my family doctor, Dr. Stephen Cohen, knows something about the issue and I was diagnosed quickly.

But here is the other story. As I go to the pharmacy to fill my prescription, I'm lucky. As a member of this assembly, I have the little drug card that everybody else gets, so my drugs are paid. Many people who suffer with this condition show up at the pharmacy—I see it first-

hand—and are not able to get the medication they need to treat their condition.

I call on this government to work on this issue so that other people who suffer from this condition are able, first, to get the type of medical attention they need and, second, get the drugs they need in order to deal with the condition.

I'll be speaking of this later as we bring forward a motion or bill on this very issue.

ONTARIO RESEARCH FUND

Mr. Mario Sergio: I'm delighted to announce that the McGuinty government allocated \$21 million to York University for scientific research in the area of autism.

World-renowned researchers and doctors working at York University will be receiving funding to develop more effective therapies for autistic children by studying what goes wrong in early childhood brain development, targeting the role of genes and environmental factors such as toxic substances which may trigger autism in individuals.

This fall, the province is announcing \$37 million in investments through the Ontario Research Fund, including this announcement. This funding will support more than 1,800 researchers working on more than 200 projects at 17 institutions across Ontario.

The Ontario Research Fund is a key part of the government's plan to support scientific excellence in much-needed research. Through a commitment of \$625 million over four years, the Ontario Research Fund provides Ontario's research community with one window for research funding. This in turn will help to create jobs and will go a long way to ensuring better health care.

Other research being undertaken is the pioneering of new treatments against breast cancer and diabetes and research into blood vessel biology to build new methods of treating vascular disease, which unfortunately is a leading cause of death in Ontario. I'm proud that the government of Ontario under Mr. McGuinty has recognized the importance of addressing the issue.

MUSKOKA ALGONQUIN HEALTHCARE

Mr. Norm Miller: Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare can no longer offer much-needed and valuable local lab services to the medical community and the residents of Parry Sound–Muskoka. A long-running government pilot project that funded community labs and area hospitals will end in a few short months. This means that lab specimens collected in local clinics will no longer be sent to local hospitals for testing. Instead, the work will go to a central lab clearinghouse in Brampton. Six well-paying jobs, very difficult to find in my riding, are at stake.

The McGuinty government told Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare that they could continue offering community lab services, "But we, the government, are no longer funding the \$1.65-million annual cost. And by the way, you, the hospital, have to balance your budget." In other

words, the hospital had no choice in the decision to shut down the local service.

I recently met with the CEO and the chair of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare. Their message to me was simple: They prefer the current model of delivery for community lab services. They want the lab work to stay in the community but they had no real choice in the decision to shut down the local services. A public meeting on the issue was held in Huntsville on Monday, and another public meeting is scheduled for tonight in Bracebridge.

Blame for the decision to shut down community lab services should go to where it belongs—to the McGuinty Liberals who ended the funding for the services.

FESTITALIA

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: I am delighted to inform the House that this month Hamilton is marking the 33rd annual Festitalia—a month-long celebration of Italian arts and culture in our community. This year's theme is "Con Amore", meaning "with love". It is in that spirit that this year's festival features a special dinner in support of Good Shepherd, an organization dedicated to helping the less fortunate in our community, as well as Moda Italia, an Italian fashion show, and this Saturday's Vino e Amore—a night of music and entertainment.

Some of the most popular events are the regional dinners featuring specialties from across Italy, hosted by clubs like Petterano, Famee Furlane, the Donnici Social Club, the Santa Croce di Magliano Association of Hamilton, the Venetian Club, the Abbruzzese Club, the Alpini Club, the Pugliese Club and the Sons of Italy.

There is also a street festival, a bocce tournament, a film night, an authors' night, the Festitalia annual mass and the Spirit of Ontario awards.

Festitalia is an exciting celebration that brings together Hamiltonians from all backgrounds and cultures. I'd like to congratulate the board and the chair, Mr. Dennis Concordia, and all of the wonderful volunteers who have made this event possible. Viva Hamilton and viva Festitalia!

MINISTER'S COMMENTS

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: My statement today is in regard to the regrettable behaviour from the Liberal government yesterday in using their question to launch a personal attack against me. It is particularly shocking in light of the new focus on creating a family-friendly Legislature. It would be nice if at least occasionally their words matched their rhetoric. My comments, unlike those from the government benches towards me personally, were not to disparage the event planner who is simply trying to run a business in this overtaxed province of Ontario. I was fulfilling my duty as opposition critic to hold the McGuinty government to account as they clearly are unable to demonstrate any amount of fiscal restraint themselves. The Minister of Education should follow her own zero-tolerance policy for bullying and stick to the substance of the issue, instead of petty attacks.

The people of Ontario deserve better. They deserve answers to their questions. Meanwhile, the minister creates a tempest in a teapot in the hopes that we won't realize that she doesn't address the issue. None of us are duped by these tactics. Government members should spend their time focusing on the needs of our students whose education and lives are being disrupted because of a reluctance to put students ahead of the government's inflexible policies.

EVENTS IN MISSISSAUGA SOUTH

Mr. Charles Sousa: I rise today to recognize and thank the many generous volunteers, sponsors and talented musicians who make our many celebrations in Mississauga South possible. Thanks to their efforts, there were many great events this summer on our lakefront. This year's Mississauga Waterfront Festival was a huge province-wide attraction, featuring extraordinary bands and children's entertainment. A good time was had by all because of the leadership and dedication of an amazing team of local volunteers.

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We also had a fantastic Canada Day in Port Credit village. Because of the support of skilled organizers, the annual Paint the Town Red celebration on the waterfront was a tremendous success that was capped off with an amazing display of fireworks.

The summer ended on the waterfront with the Southside Shuffle Blues and Jazz Festival. It boasted an impressive lineup of international headline performers and an exceptional list of local talent. The Southside Shuffle has become legendary for its fantastic music during its three-day run.

These unique events add to the character and economic strength of the lakefront communities and make us proud to live there. But they don't happen on their own; it takes an incredible amount of effort and organization. In addition, I thank those who continue to work selflessly towards a shared vision for an extended and revitalized waterfront for all to enjoy.

In Mississauga South, we're lucky to live in a community full of talented and dedicated volunteers. I extend my thanks to all those who help to make our community great. We had an outstanding summer this year on the waterfront and I look forward to next year's.

RAISE-A-READER DAY

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I rise in the House today in celebration of national Raise-a-Reader Day. Across the country, local and national newspapers have teamed up with volunteers to raise money for family literacy programs and libraries. In my own community of Etobicoke-Lakeshore, whether through our schools, our libraries, our Early Years centres or our parenting centres, all hands are on deck to improve literacy in Ontario, because literacy is critical to our everyday lives and is a necessary skill in today's economy.

Our government recognizes the importance of literacy, and that's why I'm pleased to share with you some recent accomplishments that our students have made. Ontario's elementary students continue to improve their reading, writing and math skills. Today, 65% of grades 3 and 6 students are achieving at or above the provincial standard—an 11% increase since 2003. Grade 6 French language students have improved their scores by up to 17% since 2003, and today they meet or exceed the provincial goal in all assessment areas. English and French students with special needs have improved their scores by 28%, and grade 3 students who are now in grade 6 who underperformed in grade 3 are meeting our provincial standards.

These are significant improvements, and teachers, parents, staff and students should be congratulated. When you go home tonight, pick up a book and read it to yourself or to your kids—I know I will—and celebrate national Raise-a-Reader Day.

RAMADAN

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Of course, it's with a great deal of pride and sentiment that I rise as a member of the McGuinty team in government to speak in the month of Ramadan, the month of the fast for the Muslim Canadian community across Toronto and across the entire country. As you'll know, Muslims, on the order of about one billion-plus across the globe, are celebrating this holy month of fasting, the ninth month of the Muslim calendar, which commemorates the revelation of the Holy Quran.

There are a number of rituals and procedures during the month of Ramadan, including refraining from eating and drinking from dawn till dusk, but of course the sentiments are deeper. It's a matter of controlling one's desires, wants, old habits and, actually, many of the negatives that we might fall into. The ultimate goal is one of harmony of the soul and purification of the body, as well as celebration with extreme enthusiasm as it's going to be coming to an end sometime next week.

I know, for example, that my own children, Shafiq Jr. and Shamsa, are looking forward to receiving, along with so many kids of the Muslim Canadian community, gifts in celebration and many, many different forms of treats and so on. And of course, it gives them a chance to reaffirm their faith in this wonderful multicultural mosaic that we call Ontario.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, pursuant to standing order 110(b).

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Mr. Balkissoon from the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly presents the committee's report, pursuant to standing order 110(b).

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: The report is self-explanatory.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 110(b), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I beg leave to present a report on hospitals' management and use of surgical facilities from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Mr. Sterling from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts presents the committee's report on hospitals' management and use of surgical facilities and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: This is in response to the Auditor General's report of December 2007. The auditor had the opportunity to visit three hospitals in our province and made several observations and recommendations in his report. Our committee followed up on those recommendations and has several other recommendations to make as well: 14 in total.

The committee is making these recommendations not only to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care but to the 14 local health integration networks, known as LHINs, and all of the other 150-odd hospitals across our province. Perhaps the most concern that the committee had with regard to the auditor's recommendations and the recommendations that we have made was the fact that the decisions as to who had access to surgery first across the province was not based upon patient needs, but more upon other factors within the hospital community. Therefore, the committee has asked the Ministry of Health, the LHINs and the hospitals to bring into account some of the advisory committees who have been suggesting changes and alterations to those guidelines and rules as to who would have access to our hospital rooms first. We all believe that it should be on patient need, and the most urgent patient should get first access.

We also make 13 other recommendations dealing with hospitals, and we not only urge the Ministry of Health and the LHINs to read and understand this report, but we also demand answers of the hospitals and the LHINs and the ministry with regard to some of the issues raised by the Auditor General. We believe that if hospitals try better, we can indeed have a better health care system, and the auditor has done very good work in this regard.

We would like to thank the three hospitals that were involved in this. But we make note that the other 147 hospitals must pay attention to this report and to the committee's report as well.

With that, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Sterling moves the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Debate adjourned.

MOTIONS

REVIEW OF PROVISIONAL STANDING ORDERS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Then, notwithstanding the order of the House dated May 1, 2008, the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly shall submit its report on the standing orders to the assembly by October 2, 2008.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member for Haliburton-Kawartha-Lakes-Brock on a point of order.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to inform my colleagues in the Legislature that today is World School Milk Day. I know that they'll all want to thank and recognize the Dairy Farmers of Ontario and the Ontario Dairy Council for supplying milk to the schools.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the member for her point of order. We do appreciate the good work of the dairy farmers, but that was not a point of order.

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ORDERS OF THE DAY

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

POLITIQUES FISCALES FÉDÉRALES-PROVINCIALES

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls upon all federal party leaders and Ontario candidates in the upcoming federal election to outline their plan to ensure Ontario is treated fairly so that our province has the same opportunities to succeed as the rest of Canada, including:

—fairness for unemployed workers who currently receive \$4,630 less in benefits and supports than Canadians in other provinces;

—fairness for Ontario's public health care system which is receiving \$773 million less in per capita funding this year than the rest of Canada;

—fairness for our economy in southern Ontario, the only region in Canada with no federal economic development programs;

—fairness in Ontario's infrastructure funding that is being shortchanged by \$970 million in per capita funding compared to the rest of Canada;

—fairness in equalization payments with a commitment that if Ontario qualifies for payments under the equalization program, we will receive our full share of funding as the program exists today; and

—a commitment to reduce the drain on Ontario that is now caused by annual transfers of more than \$20 billion from this province for programs and services in the rest of Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. McGuinty has moved government order number 84. Mr. McGuinty?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I am honoured to speak today in this House in support of this motion. Every day in this Legislature we, Ontario's representatives, seize the opportunity and assume our responsibility to express our differences. We believe in healthy debate as the foundation of a vibrant democracy, but there are times, I would argue, when we need to come together and speak with one voice, and this is such a time.

Ottawa n'accorde pas un traitement équitable à l'Ontario, et si nous ne faisons pas front commun, si nous ne défendons pas nos intérêts, personne d'autre ne le fera à notre place.

To be very direct, Ontario is not being treated fairly by Ottawa, and if we don't stick together, if we don't stand up for ourselves, nobody else will.

First, a brief status report on Ontarians' recent achievements: Ontarians working hard and working well together have accomplished much in the last five years. We have lower class sizes, higher test scores, higher graduation rates and the highest rate of post-secondary education in the western world. We have shorter wait times and 630,000 more Ontarians now have a doctor. We've created a greenbelt bigger than Prince Edward Island for Ontario families to enjoy forever. And in comparison to five years ago, we have 450,000 more jobs, and unemployment is down. Sure, there is more to be done, and we are all in this House eager to do more, but by any objective measure, we've made real progress together.

Having said that, it is equally true that Ontarians are anxious today. There are powerful global economic winds blowing out there. The continuing massive shake-up in the US financial industry is just the latest in a series of storms. Again, working with Ontarians, we have in place a solid plan to help grow this economy so that we might emerge from this global economic slowdown stronger than ever.

Our plan has five parts: We're cutting business taxes. We're investing in the green economy through innovation. We're investing in infrastructure like never before. We're partnering with businesses to help them grow stronger. And we've created Canada's biggest-ever worker retraining program.

Ensemble, nous travaillons fort avec les Ontariennes et Ontariens pour renforcer notre économie et créer de nouveaux emplois. Mais nous pourrions faire bien plus, et bien plus rapidement, si Ottawa nous traitait équitablement.

Together we are working hard with Ontarians to strengthen this economy and create new jobs, but we could do more and we could do it faster if we were treated fairly by Ottawa.

The Conservatives suggest we need to cut more taxes to become more competitive. The NDP suggests we invest in new programs. I believe that there is some real merit in both these suggestions, insofar as they build on our five-point plan. We would like to cut business taxes faster and we would like to strengthen our programs to grow the economy, but right now we don't have the financial resources to do that. It's not that Ontarians are coming up short when it comes to paying taxes, because they are not. The problem is that Ontario taxpayers are sending over \$20 billion of their tax dollars through Ottawa to other provinces to support tax cuts and new programs in those provinces. That's 20 billion Ontario taxpayer dollars we could use here in Ontario to strengthen this economy.

Now economists are telling us that Ontario may itself qualify for equalization. The TD Bank Financial Group's report of April 29 of this year speaks directly to the absurdity of this situation when it states:

"Ontario's projected move into equalization-recipient status ... would suggest to many Canadians the province is no longer a net contributor to federal coffers. However, this is not the case...."

"Ontario residents contributed a hefty \$21 billion more to federal coffers" in 2005 "than what was returned to the province in federal spending...."

"In actuality then," the report goes on to say, "Ontario residents will, in effect, be paying the equalization tab with their own money."

The TD Bank is unequivocal: Should we qualify for equalization, the equalization money would come from us. More specifically, it would come from Ontario taxpayers out of that \$20 billion that they're sending, through Ottawa, to other provinces.

There are some fundamental and perhaps surprising truths about which we need to speak to Ontarians: our financial circumstances. The truth is that today, by working hard and working well together, Ontarians are generating all the wealth we need to excel in the global economy. The truth is, too much of our wealth is being taken by Ottawa. The truth is that Ontario taxpayers are spending \$20 billion every year in other provinces to cut their taxes and invest in their new programs. The truth is that Ontarians are not asking for a penny from our fellow

Canadians living in other provinces. The truth is, what we're asking for and what we're demanding is that we simply keep more of our own money so that we can make ourselves stronger and, in turn, make this great country of ours that we love so much stronger too.

Les Ontariennes et Ontariens ont besoin de connaître la position des partis fédéraux sur cette question. J'ai donc écrit à tous les chefs de parti et je rendrai publique leur réponse.

Ontarians need to know where the federal parties stand on this issue, so I've written to all the leaders and I will make the responses public.

I've also raised four other specific concerns Ontarians want addressed:

(1) Unemployed workers in Ontario get \$4,600 less on average in employment insurance than they would get if they lived in another part of Canada. That's money that would help parents who have lost a job pay the mortgage, buy groceries and get the training they need to get back into the workforce.

(2) Ontario families are being shortchanged by nearly \$800 million a year for their health care. We're just getting less for our health care than other Canadians are getting for theirs. Obviously that is not fair.

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(3) Ottawa makes regional economic development investments for Canadians living in Atlantic Canada, Quebec, the west, and the north, but there is no such program for southern Ontario, home to over 10 million proud Canadians and the heart of Canada's manufacturing sector.

(4) Ontario receives almost \$1 billion less than we should for infrastructure investment, again based on the funding other provinces receive.

These are all clear-cut cases of unfairness. As Len Crispino, president and CEO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, put it, "Federal funding for vital services is not distributed fairly in this country. This is an issue that affects every man, woman and child in Ontario. It affects every person who uses health care services, who accesses training or unemployment insurance, who arrives as a new Canadian in Ontario, who drives on our roads or takes our transit."

I've asked for responses to all these issues from the federal party leaders by October 3. As I mentioned, we will share those responses with all Ontarians. In the meantime, we have created an online petition for Ontarians to sign so we can send a message with one voice to all federal leaders. Our website is fairness.ca. I'm also asking Ontarians to raise these issues one-on-one with their local candidates.

Le 14 octobre prochain, les Ontariennes et Ontariens vont élire plus qu'un tiers des députés du Canada. Nous avons un rôle très important à jouer dans le choix du prochain gouvernement et du prochain premier ministre du Canada.

On the 14th of October, Ontarians will elect more than one third of Canada's MPs. We have a huge say in who gets to form the government and who gets to be Prime

Minister. As Ontarians, it is only right, natural and predictable that we're going to have our differences on everything from gun control to how best to tackle climate change. That's understandable. But when it comes to fairness for our province, we need to close ranks. There can be no daylight between us.

I'm asking my colleagues on all sides of this House to support this resolution. It is most deliberately non-partisan. It is intended to bring us together as Ontarians on this important issue, as I believe Ontarians would want us to be, as Ontarians need us to be. We can and should vigorously debate the merits of more tax cuts and new program spending, but I believe we can and must agree on fairness for Ontario.

Together let's send a clear message to Ottawa: Give us fairness. Let us build a stronger Ontario for a stronger Canada.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: At the outset I want to indicate I'll be sharing my time with the member for Nepean-Carleton.

I'm pleased to be addressing this resolution, the so-called fairness resolution, because it provides an opportunity to put this issue in perspective. You see, what we should be talking about here is the need for a thoughtful discussion, a discussion about Ontario's role in our Confederation, about how different levels of government can find common goals and common ground and about how the entire system of equalization works and should work.

There's no shortage of legitimate issues to be discussed, and certainly, as our party leader, John Tory, has said, there is a case to be made for Ontario developing a new arrangement with the federal government. However, Mr. McGuinty is not leading nor asking for that kind of thoughtful discussion. Instead he has framed what he calls the fairness issue in very simplistic terms. Some might describe it as jingoistic language. To Mr. McGuinty, it is a matter of "them" and "us"; not how we can work together, but what's in it for his government. To Mr. McGuinty, it's not a matter of the broad issues of national finances and intergovernmental co-operation; it's simply a money grab. Worst of all, he is attempting to use this issue as an excuse and a smokescreen. It's his constant excuse for any economic failing.

Ontario has gone from first to last place in Canada in economic growth. "Gee," says Mr. McGuinty, "if I only had some of that money back that Ontario sends to Ottawa, I could do something about that." Ontario has lost nearly a quarter of a million manufacturing jobs. "Gosh," he says, "that's just awful. You know, if we just had some more fairness, that wouldn't be happening."

Our unemployment rate is above the national average for the first time since the 1970s. We're the only province that will see zero economic growth this year. Consumer confidence is tanking, job losses are mounting, and people are justifiably worried about their futures, their kids' futures and their grandkids' futures. Mr.

McGuinty's response: "Sounds like we might have to do something, at some point. For now, though, I'll just point his finger at Ottawa."

The Premier is using the equalization and fairness issue as a substitute for a real plan to stop the decline in our economy and the bleeding of jobs. It's become clear that when Dalton McGuinty talks about his five-point plan for the economy, it really comes down to this: point 1, blame Ottawa; point 2, see point 1; point 3, recap points 1 and 2; point 4, refer to points 1 to 3 above; and point 5, blame Ottawa again. By following this formula, he's hoping to avoid dealing with the real fundamental issues facing our economy.

It also, I guess, gets him out of the woods when it comes to a serious discussion of the very complex issues surrounding equalization. He's trying to reduce those complexities to a simple magic bullet, the one-step mystic spell that will solve all of his problems. Now if he can get more money from the feds, he won't have to rein in his government's out-of-control spending.

Interjections.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: That obviously is irking some of my honourable friends across the way, but the truth sometimes hurts. And the truth is that this isn't about fairness; it's about looking at our national government like it's some kind of cash machine and you're chipping for another fix.

This government wants more money because it has liked its program spending by 31%, much higher than the rates of inflation or population growth. And even though they've been the beneficiaries of dramatically increased federal transfers over the past two years, they're looking for another cash injection. Why, you might ask? Because they are hooked on spending like a junkie on meth. You've heard of Hooked on Phonics; they are hooked on spending.

It's not enough that Ontarians spend nearly half their income on various kinds of taxes, including the second-highest personal income taxes in Canada. That's still not enough money for them. It's not enough that Ontario's business taxes are among the highest in the world. Mr. McGuinty still wants more cash, and he'll take it from wherever he can get it.

And to my Liberal colleagues, if you don't like that act about your business taxes coming from me, I suggest you take it up with Roger Martin. He pointed that out at the Progressive Conservative economic summit that we held last week, a summit that the government refused to hold. Roger Martin—one of the most respected experts on competitiveness in the world and one of the government's own key advisers—pointed out that your business taxes are keeping jobs and investment away from Ontario. He also called your tax structure dumb. That was his word, not mine, although I have to say I agree completely.

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So rather than tackle that problem and exercise some restraint, Mr. McGuinty fastens on to another potential source to feed his addiction—the federal government. I

suppose, for Liberals anyway, it's difficult to do what sensible families do in hard times. It's hard to tighten your belt and stop hiring all those advisers and spin doctors with six-figure salaries. It's much easier to cry "unfair" and demand more from someone else. That's the smokescreen that really lies at the heart of Mr. McGuinty's fairness campaign in this resolution.

It's becoming increasingly clear that some of the members opposite are a little uncomfortable with this. I'm sure most of us have had the opportunity to watch the Wizard of Oz at some point. When Dorothy and her friends discover that the wizard is just an ordinary man with a special-effects machine, they pull aside the curtain to reveal him. Remember Oz shouting, "Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain"? Well, here we are, pulling back the curtain and revealing the inconvenient truth about this fairness campaign. Briefly, anyway, let's leave that point behind.

Let's pretend just for a minute that they actually do want to talk seriously about equalization and about fairness. Let's leave aside the fact that the Premier's online petition is a rather pointless public relations exercise, since the Legislature can't accept petitions without original signatures. Let's all hold hands and imagine that they're serious.

What are the merits of their demands? Let's take, for example, health care, one area where they want more federal money. That money is already on its way. Federal transfers are already being increased. They're up half a billion dollars this year and growing by 6% a year. So that battle essentially has already been won. You have to wonder why they are after more health care funding when they always told us that they're going to have enough, thanks to the Premier's broken promise and the largest single tax increase in the history of Ontario. I'm sure the folks across the way remember the \$2.7-billion health tax they imposed on Ontario.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Those voters who the Premier looked in the eye and made commitments to certainly remember it. Once again, it's easier to go after another money fix than to deal with the waste, find smarter alternatives, stand up to the unions or anything else they could do in health care.

Let's talk about another item on their list of demands, and that is—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I've called order a number of times. Respect was given to the previous speaker and I think this speaker should have the same.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Thank you for that, Speaker. I appreciate your intervention.

Let's talk about another item on their list of demands, and that's infrastructure. Here's another example of the pot calling the kettle—this government collects \$4.1 billion a year in gas tax revenues from Ontarians. Unlike other provinces, it does not reinvest all of that money into

roads, highways and bridges. It keeps a sum for other priorities like massive casino parties. I have a story here from CanWest News about a \$2.7-million party that Ontario taxpayers paid for in Windsor—the gala opening of Caesars Windsor—at a time when they're asking the feds to give us more money. CanWest says it's "probably the most expensive party ever held in the city, possibly in all of Ontario," at taxpayers' expense—that's just one example—when you're going to have to show restraint in terms of implementing a program to go after poverty in this province.

I would think that when people look at this, every thinking Ontarian should be offended.

Back again to the infrastructure issue: If this government is worried about infrastructure—and they should be—let's see them prove it. Put 100% of your gas tax revenues toward rebuilding this province. Do that and you will have some sort of case for going to other governments and demanding more. Of course, you may have overlooked the \$6.2-billion deal you just signed with the federal government. They just handed you the single biggest federal investment in public infrastructure since World War II. I suppose the attitude over there is, "What have you done for me lately?"

Another area where this government is crying foul is on employment insurance benefits, and there is an unfair balance here, but it's the balance between the needs of the system and the unfair premium charged to employers. If this government really wants to help, it should not be trying to grab more EI cash from Ottawa; it should be lowering its own business income taxes and fighting for lower premiums. That would return money to Ontario in the most useful way possible. As a reduction in business costs, it would boost employment and make us more competitive.

This Liberal government knows perfectly well the differences under the EI program depend on local unemployment rates. It's part of the whole fairness idea. Maybe I shouldn't mention, but I will, the extra half billion dollars you get under EI for training every year or the labour market agreements that give Ontario a bigger share than any other province. Maybe the other provinces might get the idea that that's unfair.

This resolution also speaks to the need for a regional development program for Ontario. Why? Because other regions have one; we're jealous? Perhaps it's because you want more money to try to pick winners and losers, like all of the businesses you've invested in with no job guarantees. Something we should get into at some point in the not-too-distant future is your investment in asset-based commercial paper, which we hear now could be costing us in the neighbourhood of \$700 million. Perhaps it's because you forgot about the \$1.6 billion that Ottawa already invested in the auto sector in Ontario.

There's no doubt that direct industry support is a tool, but it's only one of many that you need to use to get our economy moving again. It's much more important to provide broad-based tax relief that helps all businesses grow and succeed.

That's the laundry list. It's pretty long, but it comes down to one word: gimme. It's dressed up in pretty language and they tried to put a David-and-Goliath spin on it—brave little Dalton McGuinty takes his sling against the towers of Parliament Hill—but it still comes down to "gimme."

Finally, let's talk about the whole concept of fairness and the idea of being a champion of Ontario. I think it's fair to say that Ontario could use a new deal with Ottawa. It's even clearer that Ontario's municipalities deserve a better deal with Queen's Park. Fairness is fairness—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order. Order.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The troops are restless, Speaker.

I think it's fair. I think we should all agree that fairness is fairness, and the Premier can't have it both ways. If he truly thinks that different levels of government should be treating each other with respect and helping to meet each other's needs, his argument applies even more strongly to Ontario's cities and towns. They're still waiting for him to live up to his broken promises of partnership; they're still waiting for something more than one-time announcements; they're still waiting for secure, long-term funding that demonstrates some real respect for their needs. The Premier has to cast the beam from his own eye before he starts talking about the mote to be crossed in Ottawa.

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As for being the champion of Ontario, that's an admirable goal. I think we'd all love to see Mr. McGuinty actually put on that armour and ride off to slay the dragons that threaten us. He could start by tackling our economic woes; that's the first dragon any champion of Ontario should be aiming at. But if he really wants to carry the lance for Ontario on the national scene, there's another threat he could help to defeat, and that's the massive, multi-billion dollar tax hike, the Dion carbon tax, being proposed by his federal cousins. As Mr. McGuinty rightly said a few weeks ago, everyone knows that you don't impose a major tax increase when your economy is in trouble. Mr. McGuinty went on to say that even the NDP knows better, but I'm not going to join the Premier in insulting my esteemed colleagues on this side of the floor, especially with a leadership candidate present.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Who? Paul, I wouldn't take that.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: If the Premier is so concerned about billions of dollars flowing from Ontario's economy to feed the federal government, he should be horrified at the thought of the carbon tax and should be openly and aggressively opposing it. It's going to cost Ontario another \$4 billion a year just in extra energy costs, nearly \$900 a family, and that's a fraction of the total cost when the carbon tax drives up the price of virtually all goods and services. It's a green shift, all right, a shift of the green in our wallets to a Liberal government in Ottawa.

If \$20 billion a year from Ontario to Ottawa is bad, what about \$24 billion? Shouldn't Mr. McGuinty, the wannabe champion of Ontario's best interests, stand up and clearly reject that idea? Of course, I don't want to reach this conclusion, unless, of course, his campaign is not about fairness or protecting Ontarians. Remember that I said earlier that we agreed to hold hands and pretend today.

We're going to pretend that we believe in the dubious connection the Premier makes between his fairness demands and his ability to act on the economy and other issues. We're going to join the Premier in pretending that the huge gap he talks about is a gap between governments—his and Ottawa's—but of course it isn't. When Mr. McGuinty talks about how much money Ontario sends to the federal government, it is not all money coming from Queen's Park; it is money coming from Ontario taxpayers.

But let's keep pretending. Let's pretend that the \$20-billion figure he cites is actually accurate and up-to-date, not three years old. Remember last year, when the federal government realigned the equalization system in Ontario's favour, after the federal Liberals had ignored Ontario for years? Remember the massive increases in transfers, the extra \$2.7 billion that the McGuinty government is receiving as a result, not to mention the extra 600 million this government is getting this year, over and above what was budgeted? We'll just close our eyes and ignore all that; otherwise, the careful fantasy Mr. McGuinty is weaving would fall apart and we might have to deal with reality.

This is not a question that should be reduced to black and white. This is not a simple matter of fair or unfair, but a series of complex issues that touch on every major policy area. As I said before, you can certainly make the case for the need for new arrangements. The case has been made before, new deals have been struck and our confederation moves forward in a more equitable way. That the Progressive Conservative official opposition wants to stop is the Premier's use of this issue to avoid the real economic questions, saying too much money is going to Ottawa, while at the same time failing to oppose a carbon tax that really would suck billions out of this Ontario economy.

This resolution, Mr. McGuinty's resolution, is a finger-pointing exercise wrapped up in a coating of patriotism which doesn't wash. Any legitimate points are undermined by this government's determination to pick a fight. And that is the biggest shame of all.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): No—
Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I thought I said "the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills."

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Oh, I mean—Carleton; I'm sorry. I misheard.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm about two feet taller.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): My apology. Further debate.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much to the leader of the official opposition. I appreciate his candid comments.

I'm proud to take part in today's debate on fairness for Ontario. As an Ontarian and a Canadian, I view this debate as healthy for our democracy, for our country and for all those people whom I represent in this Legislature. I support fairness for Ontario, and I'm happy to add my voice to calls for treating Canada's most populous province, the economic engine of our country and the most diverse jurisdiction in Confederation, with even-handedness, particularly as we face unique challenges in our economy, our health care sector and our criminal justice system.

As our leader, John Tory, has pointed out, of course we believe in fairness for Ontario, but the issue of fairness in Ontario is not about equalization; it is about our economy. I think it is safe to say that John Tory, Bob Runciman, myself and our caucus agree with Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who said just days ago: "Our objective ... is to keep Ontario as the industrial engine of our economy. It is not to see Ontario become a have-not, equalization ... province, and I hope the government of Ontario shares that objective."

In the official opposition, we are concerned that the McGuinty Liberals are blaming the federal Conservatives instead of taking responsibility for the problems they have created for themselves, and in turn, for all Ontarians, those problems being high taxes, skyrocketing energy prices and excessive regulation. It is without question that Ontario has been slipping since Mr. McGuinty came into office. When the Premier of Ontario, Mr. McGuinty, took office, he led the economic engine of Canada. Sadly, now, five years later, under Mr. McGuinty's watch, manufacturing jobs in Ontario have been lost to the tune of 200,000. Ontario has gone from first to worst in Confederation in terms of economic growth, and we are now on the verge of becoming a have-not province.

As an Ontarian, this truly, truly concerns me. One would hope that this motion put forward today by our Premier is more about working together for Ontarians and less about trying to find a scapegoat for Mr. McGuinty's own mismanagement of our now fragile economy because of his very own record of out-of-control spending and record high taxes.

As I mentioned, the debate is about the economy, not equalization. I fear that Mr. McGuinty is using the name of fairness to instead further his own political agenda and ambitions, rather than improving the economy which right now demands all of our attention. Looking at this resolution, one can judge the merits of his arguments as much by what is excluded as by what is included. This is of course troubling on both those accounts. That is why I have two major concerns on how this resolution before us reads and what it is saying to Ontarians.

First, Mr. McGuinty makes an incorrect assumption about employment insurance, which I look forward to touching on later. But I think that in a very real way it exposes the shallowness of his arguments and perhaps is a telling example of why Ontarians aren't drawn to his point of view.

Second, the objectivity of this resolution is obviously called into question with the glaring omission of the ill-fated and risky Liberal carbon tax plan and its detrimental impacts on Ontario's already slowing manufacturing sector, not to mention for areas like mine and ones with strong agricultural communities, what negative impact it will have on family farms right across this province. I can understand why Mr. McGuinty may want to shy away from the carbon tax and criticizing the Liberals, considering his own brother, the federal Liberal environment critic, is an architect of the Liberals' environmental plan. But it's important to those of us taking part in debate to focus on the issue at hand.

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Before I delve into my two major concerns, which I reiterate are the incorrect EI assumption and the glaring omission of the risky carbon tax plan put forward by the Liberals, I do want to take a moment to discuss equalization. It's important for those of us who are taking part in this debate to understand the intricacies of the equalization formula, that we are aware of the posturing that has taken place for decades in this country and that we're aware of exactly what Mr. McGuinty's math actually adds up to. Specifically, it is important to remember that under the Chrétien and Martin Liberals in Ottawa this province, and basically every other province, had the federal books balanced on their backs. There were record cuts to the provinces in health and social transfers, and these transfers are slowly being rebuilt after cutting and slashing by the Chrétien-Martin Liberals in the early 1990s. I'm sure some members here will remember those days. But don't just take my word for it; take Allan Rock's. It was he who said: "It was my government that diminished the size of transfer payments.... I will not stand here and tell you that the cuts in transfer payments we made were insignificant. They were not. And I won't tell you that they have not had an impact. They have." This, of course, was in a speech to the Canadian Medical Association on August 20, 1997.

I'm also sure that members here will never be able to forget when Ontario asked the previous Liberal governments for fairness in transfer payments. Not only were Ontarians' pleas ignored, but the Chrétien-Martin Liberal caucus chair even supported a separatist government in another province over his own. Again, don't just take my word for it; take Paul DeVillers's. Back in 2001, Paul DeVillers, who was an Ontario MP and also the federal Liberal caucus chair, told the National Post, "We can sign agreements with the separatist government but we can't sign a time-of-day agreement with Ontario."

Even when the federal Liberals admitted their cuts have hurt health care, when they said they would rather deal with separatists than deal with Ontario, what did the

provincial Liberals say? Do you guys remember what you said? It would have been helpful had you said nothing at all, because this is what you said: "'The federal government has given the province \$895 million more than they need for health care,' said David Caplan to the Guelph Mercury on November 10, 1999." Our current Minister of Health at the time said that the federal Liberal government, who by its own admission was cutting and slashing our health care dollars to the bone, was giving Ontario too much money. I thought it was a joke until I read those words myself, yet it gets better.

Mr. McGuinty, who is waging a partisan war during a catastrophic campaign for his own Liberal Party, at one time actually applauded the Conservative government's changes that just last year changed the equalization formula for all Canadians. At the time Mr. McGuinty said about Stephen Harper, the Prime Minister, he "made a deliberate effort to bring a principle-based approach to ... equalization and federal transfers.... We are very much in agreement with this approach." I'm not sure what has changed between Mr. McGuinty's interview with the Globe and Mail on June 15, 2007, and today, September 24, 2008, with the exception of two things: In 2008-09, Ontario is expected to receive \$13.9 billion in transfers, which is an increase of \$2.7 billion from the last Liberal government in 2006. Secondly, it is pretty obvious that there is a federal election on. Yes, there is a federal election on and the federal Liberals are having what could be considered the worst election campaign since Confederation. The big red machine is broken and it needs a lot of help. Enter Mr. McGuinty and this Hail Mary pass. As I mentioned, this resolution before us contains two flaws: one which is contained within the false assumption on EI, and the other which is omitted, the devastating impacts of a carbon tax on our economy.

First let's look at the EI assumption in this resolution, because I think it speaks volumes to the credibility of Mr. McGuinty in his "fairness" fight. While it is clear that Ontario deserves its fair share—and no one here in the opposition questions that—I think it is important that as a Legislature we make our case based on facts. Unfortunately, in their haste to join the federal election campaign of Stéphane Dion, the McGuinty Liberals have added a point not even relevant to the debate. As Mr. McGuinty surely must know, the employment insurance program is based per taxpayer, not by province. The EI program is designed to ensure that eligibility and duration of benefits depend on local unemployment insurance rates. That means those who have a strong economy and who value a strong economy also value fewer people drawing employment insurance. By Mr. McGuinty's logic and the Liberal Party of Ontario's, he would like to see more EI dollars coming into Ontario and thus he would value a higher unemployment rate in this province. This hardly sounds like someone championing Ontario. It hardly sounds like Mr. McGuinty is standing up for Ontario, but let Ontarians be the judge of that. I'm sure most Ontarians would take a strong, vibrant, job-filled economy over an unemployment line any day.

Not only does Mr. McGuinty miss the boat, so to speak, on the whole premise of EI and its program; he also doesn't factor in the fundamentals of why the program was designed. The program was designed to ensure that unemployed Canadians living in areas with similar rates of unemployment and job opportunities are treated the same, regardless of where they live. That's because it's a national program that benefits the taxpayers who pay into it, not the provinces. It works this way: EI provides income support to eligible unemployed Canadians wherever they live, and all contributors are entitled to benefits provided they meet qualifying and entitlement conditions. I tell that to the Liberals because I'm not sure if any of them actually ever had a member of their family on employment insurance. I've had lots, and I can tell you this: Anyone on employment insurance needs the money. What they don't need is the provincial government under Dalton McGuinty trying to take it away from them. As my leader, John Tory, pointed out today in the Sun, even if Ottawa were to rewrite its equalization rules, funds would return to the individual taxpayers, and rightfully so.

Now, the second issue which I raised in this resolution as tricky, because it omits Stéphane Dion's risky carbon tax plan—I know at least one of Mr. McGuinty's advisers has concerns with it too. Warren Kinsella said on May 15, 2008, "Forget about the fact that, with fuel prices having gone up a billion per cent in recent months, we already have a driver-deterring carbon tax. Forget about the fact that it's unfair to people on fixed income (like the elderly) and the poor (who have to heat their homes and buy food, too), and is therefore profoundly un-Liberal." As recently as June 18, Kinsella said, "Sifting through the entrails leaked out to the media, was I wrong to oppose a carbon tax right now? No way. I'm for punishing polluters, not consumers. Cap-and-trade; not this."

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The risky carbon tax plan would be bad for Ontario. It should be in this resolution if Mr. McGuinty were truly serious about engaging the federal parties this election on fairness for Ontario in a non-partisan and objective way. The carbon tax is not fair to Ontario. The Ontario Taxpayers Federation recently completed a study of the risky carbon tax and its impacts on Ontario businesses. They found that the increased power bills alone will be more than the tax offsets they would receive.

If we were all to agree that the real problem facing Ontario is our economy and, on the one hand, we have our Premier giving up the fight and asking for more EI and, on the other, he is totally ignoring a risky carbon tax plan that the Canadian Taxpayers Federation has said will cost Ontario businesses—what are Ontarians to expect? Ontario is a strong province, but Mr. McGuinty is taking our economic downturn laying down. If Mr. McGuinty was so concerned about Ontario, he would de-ounce the carbon tax and he would get to work to ensure Ontarians were on the assembly line, not the unemployment line.

At a time of economic uncertainty, Ontarians cannot afford to experiment with Stéphane Dion's risky carbon tax. Energy costs are arising in this province. How would an added tax be fair for our residents? Ontario is a global trading partner. How fair would it be for Ontario's international exporters when they begin to see their markets shrink when other countries retaliate for the increased tariffs they face when importing to Canada? By undermining the economy, Mr. Dion's plan will only re-centralize money further in the hands of Ottawa, which will completely undermine the progress that Canada and Ontario have made and the changes with the federal transfers just last year.

Remember that change. We spoke about it earlier, the change in 2007 made by Stephen Harper and lauded by Dalton McGuinty when he said, and I again quote, that he "made a deliberate effort to bring a principle-based approach to ... equalization and federal transfers.... We are very much in agreement with this approach." Don't you think we should all know a little bit more about this risky carbon tax and all it will cost the province, including recentralizing those hard-fought funds that the provinces, including the province of Ontario, had decentralized into our hands just last year, in 2007?

Shouldn't it be a major issue in this debate? I think so. That is why I'll support an amendment to this resolution to incorporate the risky carbon tax. I think it's relevant to the debate before us, and I think the carbon tax legitimately needs to be examined in this Legislature for its potentially harmful effects to our economy.

I want to touch on something that our leader in the Legislature, Bob Runciman, brought up during his remarks, and that's the assumption on the \$20-billion gap. The figure \$20 billion—our research indicates that it is out of date. It is based on 2005 data, not 2010, when Ontario is to start receiving payments. I actually think it's pretty dismal for us to be debating Ontario becoming a have-not status.

I raised in the Legislature I think almost a year ago the fact that I grew up in a have-not province. I was born and raised and educated in Nova Scotia. Many members of my family worked seasonal and many of them had to draw EI. I came to Ottawa because Ontario was always the land of opportunity in this country. It was where everybody went. People would go to Toronto because that's where the jobs were. It was the economic engine of the country, and every Canadian knew it. Every Canadian was proud of Ontario because they knew that's where they could have a better life. I came here with 200 bucks in my pocket. My parents' friend drove me. He was actually a Liberal; he actually ran for the Liberal Party. But he was a nice man, George Manos. He drove me to Ottawa when he was visiting three of his four kids who moved here. Two hundred dollars in my pocket, and I worked hard. Now I own a home in Nepean. I have a little girl. She'll be born and raised and educated in Ontario, a province I'm very proud of but one that, when I came here, was at the height of its economic boom. It was the strongest in this country, and in five short years,

the folks opposite have taken us from first to worst. They've taken our spending from \$60 billion a year to \$30 billion in a short period of time, and now we're talking about Ontario becoming a have-not province. Well, I'll stand up for Ontario. I'll stand up and ask you why you're not doing more for our economy.

I'll support this resolution; there's no question about that. I have outlined two areas where I'm very concerned: I think that your assumptions on EI are faulty, and you're undermining the individual taxpayer in this country.

At the end of the day, my favourite prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, once said, "Let us be English or let us be French ... and above all let us be Canadians." That's a big challenge for the folks right across the way. They're not thinking about what this province means to Confederation.

I want to talk a little bit more about the so-called \$20-billion fiscal gap, because reducing the so-called \$20-billion fiscal gap would not increase provincial revenues unless Mr. McGuinty again increased provincial taxes. I guess I have a question: Why would anybody increase taxes to reduce them? It doesn't make sense, nor does the economic plan of the Liberal Party.

Mr. McGuinty and his colleagues are ignoring the truth. Ontario would not be receiving equalization payments if the economy was growing faster. GDP growth at just 2% would add \$1.5 billion to the provincial coffers. We need Ontario to remain the economic and key engine of this country, and we, on this side, will all fight for that.

As I conclude, I just want to make two points. There is a lot of unfairness in this province. I want to raise two examples.

Presently, Ontarians serving in the Canadian Armed Forces are forced to pay the health tax, even though the federal government pays the health care bill for those who are serving us so proudly in Canada's military. Mr. McGuinty should support our troops and eliminate the health tax for men and women serving our country abroad. That's fairness for Ontarians.

My colleague, Sylvia Jones, is a visionary. The registered disability savings plan brought in by my colleague's husband, Jim Flaherty—I'm very proud of the work Mr. Flaherty is doing for Ontario and for Canada. He brought in something for children in this country who are disabled, to help their parents. This Liberal government is clawing back that benefit. Mr. McGuinty is penalizing children in this province who are disabled. They do not receive the benefits that children in British Columbia or Newfoundland receive as a result of the work that Mr. Flaherty has done. And to date, the McGuinty Liberals have not jumped on the bandwagon with Sylvia Jones and her private member's bill to protect children in this province who are disabled. If they were really serious about fairness for Ontarians, they wouldn't even make Sylvia Jones debate her private member's bill; they would adopt it. They would just do it.

Unfairness is all around us. Again, there's no question; I'll support this. I'll also be urging my colleagues

opposite to support our amendment on the risky carbon tax, because I think that if they see it, especially those rural members, they'll know it will be detrimental for our agricultural communities if it is put in place, and I think you all know it. I think you all know too that that plan would be detrimental with respect to our small and medium-sized businesses. The folks who are working hard as importers and exporters are going to be penalized because of retaliation from other countries, who are going to see their tariffs increase.

In terms of employment insurance, I'm still trying to figure out why the province that should have every single young man and woman out working wants them on the unemployment line. We can do better than that, and we should do better than that.

Ladies and gentlemen, I want to thank you for indulging me in this debate. I want to thank the Premier for bringing up this issue. I want to thank Bob Runciman, our leader of the official opposition, for what I thought was a very important speech.

I want to make one comment about that. I noticed all members of the official opposition and all members of the third party sat and listened with respect to our Premier as he made his comments. But throughout the vast majority of my remarks and throughout the entire remarks of the leader of the official opposition, we dealt with heckles and jeers. And if you can't call a spade a spade in this very important debate, I don't know why we're even having it.

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So on that, I conclude. I encourage all of our colleagues to do the right thing for Ontario—to do the right thing for Ontarians, who at the end of the day are all Canadians, and we should all be very proud of that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I actually look forward to getting into this debate today in regard to how Ontario is treated or not treated on the part of the federal government when it comes to equalization payments or transfers or how much money we give over to the federal government. I just want to say at the outset of this that, generally, we support the motion. We, as New Democrats, have made the argument for a long time that in fact we needed to get a better deal from Ottawa.

But I do want to say that this is a bit of a four-trick pony. I've been around this place for almost 19 years now, and I've seen now four Premiers go down this road. First of all, it was—what's his name again? Bob Rae; that's right. He was Premier of Ontario between 1990 and 1995, and I remember that he was the first one who raised this issue and said, "We're having a problem with regard to the transfers from Ottawa and we're having a hard time trying to make ends meet in the time of this recession." And I remember the now Premier and the then member of the opposition, along with members from the Conservative Party, who used to get up and say, "Mr. Premier, you don't have a revenue problem. You've got a spending problem." That's what the argument used to be.

It was a total non-acceptance on the part of either the Liberal or Conservative Party of the day to say that maybe we should get into a debate about how we're treated by Ottawa. Instead, they took the political route and we paid the price for that.

I would argue that there are some things Mr. Rae did that he probably shouldn't have done that might have made things a little bit easier, and I guess that's just as well. He's now with the federal Liberal Party, and I hope he does to the federal Liberal Party what he did to mine. So I wish him well.

We then had another election and we had a guy by the name of Mike Harris. Mike Harris was converted on the way to the election of 1995. All of a sudden it wasn't a spending problem, it was a revenue problem. Mike Harris went down this four-trick pony as well. Mr. Harris tried the same strategy as the previous Premier and went down the road of trying to get a better deal from the federal government and making arguments as to why Ontario should get its fair share.

Then we got rid of that Premier and we got that other guy, Mr. Ernie Eves, who became the third Premier in my time in this place. And Mr. Eves stood in this House—I watched him on many occasions—making the arguments that the two previous Premiers had made. All of a sudden, he got converted as well on the road to Damascus, as they might say, because he accepted that it was no longer a spending problem, it was actually a revenue problem, and that the federal government should do something to remedy that.

At that time and the time of both Mr. Harris and Mr. Eves, and Mr. McGuinty as the leader of the opposition, they didn't accept that argument. I remember the debates well in this Legislature. I remember the press. I remember the discussions in the greater public with regard to what was going on. The Liberal Party of the day, the opposition, led by Mr. McGuinty, said, "Mr. Harris, Mr. Eves, we don't buy that. You're the government. You've got to fix these problems."

So we have another election, and I get to see the fourth Premier of Ontario since the time that I've been here. And it's amazing: He's converted. Upon the election of 2003 or whatever year it was, Mr. McGuinty did what he's famous for: He changed positions. People would call it a flip-flop, but I don't want to go that far. But he got converted as well, and all of a sudden he said, "We no longer have a spending problem. We've got a revenue problem. I'm embarking on a campaign, and the support of all political parties and I solicit the support of Ontarians and the media so that we can go after the federal government"—at the time Monsieur Chrétien, and eventually the federal government of Mr. Martin and now the government of Mr. Harper. He made the argument, "Poor us, Ontario. We don't have the money. We need to have all the help we can get from the federal government."

I just want to say to the members of this House and to the media and others who are watching that yes, indeed, I've always felt there is a problem, and we're going to

talk about that a little bit later, but this is the oldest trick in the book. This is the trick that has been used since the 1990s by Premiers of all political stripes who stand in the House and say, "I make the argument that Ottawa is not treating us well, and let's put the attention over there because it certainly can't be over here when it comes to finding the solutions to problems that we face in Ontario."

Do we have a problem in Ontario? Of course we do. Go to Hamilton; go to Niagara; go to Smooth Rock Falls; go to Ottawa. Go to many cities and towns and hamlets across this province, and you're going to find fairly high unemployment as compared to what it was five, 10, 15 or 20 years ago. As a result, there are fewer people working, so what happens? The less people work, the more they are in need of government services, unemployment insurance, and if that runs out, welfare and various government services, and they don't pay taxes, because they don't have revenue. They don't have an income. So it does put a strain on the province; there is no question.

But, in the end, the way to fix this problem is for us as a province to take our responsibility as well and do something to help those workers in Hamilton, to help those workers in Niagara at John Deere, to help those workers in Windsor and Toronto and Oshawa and Smooth Rock Falls and Opatika and all communities in between, to help build the strong, robust economy that we need in this province.

I believe as a New Democrat—and I've said this in the launch of my leadership race—that you cannot build strong social programs without having a strong economy. I understand that as a social democrat. Social democrats around the world have understood that. Look at the Scandinavian countries and others. I also accept the argument that wealth creation is necessary if you're going to build the economy you need to be able to have the revenue to make the key investments in programs that we think are important in this province.

But for the provincial government to say that the way we do the key investments for the people in communities across Ontario is by going after the federal government in order to get more money, I think, takes away from the argument that maybe we have an obligation, that maybe we in this Legislature, as the government of Ontario, have something that we can do in order to try to fix the economy.

I've watched the Premier over the last four or five years that he's been in the top job in Ontario, and if I close my eyes and I listen, I sometimes find there's not a lot of difference between him and the Conservative government before him when it comes to one key issue, and that issue is, to what degree the provincial government of today is prepared to use the tools that it has at its disposal in order to assist the economy of Ontario.

For example, we in northern Ontario were the first to really start to feel the crunch in the economy. Forestry went through a huge downturn—yes, because of pressures from outside of Ontario in regard to what happened to the American economy, but when you look at how

Ontario has weathered the storm when it comes to its forestry industry compared to Manitoba, British Columbia or Quebec, we have done far worse than anybody else. You know why that is? The provincial government does not want to use the tools that it has in order to assist that sector of the economy.

I remember specifically bringing the mayors of Highway 11 into this Legislature, and eventually into a meeting with the Premier and the then-Minister of Natural Resources, to make the argument in Opasatika when Tembec was going to shut down the Excel mill, closing the only employer in town. They went in and said: "We need a couple of things from you. The crown, being the government through the Minister of Natural Resources, controls the fibre that's in our forests, and if Tembec closes down our mill, we need you to make that allocation of timber stay with the community. We need you to use the force that you have under law to effect the policy that when a mill shuts down, the trees and the fibre don't revert back to the company that closed down so they can take it somewhere else and process it. It needs to be tied to the community."

The Premier, at that meeting, and echoed by the Minister of Natural Resources—they weren't going to go there. They were going to allow the private sector to work this out and shake itself out so eventually the private sector would do the restructuring it needs in order to become the strong industry that they need to be to survive. I remember at that meeting, the mayor of Opasatika said, "But there's hardly going to be anybody standing." This is a very deep economic problem we're running into when it comes to housing starts in United States etc. Lumber prices are dropping. Demand is down. If you give that access to that fibre for those companies to keep for themselves, when we do get the rebound, there won't be five mills on Highway 11, between Constance Lake and Cochrane; there'll be one or maybe two. How does that help our economy and how does that help the workers in those communities?

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When I say I close my eyes and listen to Mr. McGuinty and he sounds no different than Mr. Eves or Mr. Harris, the point is that he is not prepared, along with his current Liberal government, to use the tools he has at his disposal in order to assist those sectors in the economy that need help. There are things we could be doing that would help us to weather the storm that may not avert every closure we have across the province, but I think they would avert many, and they would at least put us in a position to be able to recapture those markets that we had when the economy turns around.

So I say to the government across the way and to the Premier, you make the argument that maybe we need a better deal from Ottawa, but I say to you yes, that might be true, and let's go off and do that, but don't make that an excuse as to why you cannot do anything to assist people in this province in dealing with the issues that are affecting us in the economy here in Ontario. We need to use the tools at our disposal here in Ontario to be able to

assist those communities and those industries to basically grow, prosper and create the jobs that are necessary so that Ontarians can live the life they've always had in this province, which was a fairly good life because of the employment we've had here.

We have seen hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs go, basically disappear, and what's worse, pop up again in Mexico in some cases, or in China or India, and this government has done nothing to stop that. I'll give you another little example. When the mining industry was going through the big takeover era, where the giant called Inco in Sudbury and the other giant called Falconbridge—two large Canadian mining companies operating in Canada, in this case in Sudbury and Timmins, for my particular concern; they were basically being sought after to be bought out by foreign interests from Brazil and Switzerland—we New Democrats—Shelley Martel and myself and others—under the leadership of Howard Hampton said to the government of the day, "We cannot stop globalization and we cannot stop the ability of companies to buy each other up. That is something that happens within the private sector.

"We are not calling on the nationalization of industry the way George Bush is nationalizing the banks and the financial institutions." My God, I'm getting confused. The Republicans have become true leftists. I saw that Mr. Sarkozy—I wander away from my speech a little bit—the right-wing President of France, got up this morning and said, "Capitalism is bad," and that we need to regulate capitalism, and I watched Mr. Bush last week talking about, "We have to nationalize our financial institutions." I'm getting really confused about who the left is in this country and who the left is in this world. I just thought it was kind of interesting. Anyways, they finally adopted a social-democratic principle, which is that capitalism is good. But there need to be some rules of the road. If you don't have rules of the road and you don't use the tools at your disposal as a government, at the provincial or federal level, the economy is not going to do as well, workers are not going to get the deal they need and, I would argue, entrepreneurs are not going to do as well either.

So I say to the government across the way, sure, let's try to get a better deal from Ottawa, but what are we going to do, utilizing the tools that we have? So back to my point: When Falconbridge and Inco were purchased, we said, "Put some conditions on the sale, that head office jobs need to remain here in Ontario, and that the materials and goods that are being purchased by the mines in Timmins and in Sudbury, in various places in Ontario, need to be sourced to Ontario contractors and suppliers." The McGuinty government of the day and the Minister of Mines, Mr. Bartolucci from Sudbury, said no. What would have been wrong with our using the tools of government to say, "Well, certainly to God, if we have a natural resource in the ground, we Ontarians should benefit from that natural resource"? So use the public policy and the legal authority that we have in order to say, "Yes, we understand that globalization is here, we

understand that you can't stop corporations from gobbling each other up"—although we may not like it—"but at least set conditions and use the tools of government to try to protect local businesses and workers so that we don't end up in a situation that that will happen."

I put this on the record: When the prices of nickel and copper go down, those companies are not going to have any affinity for the communities of Sudbury or Timmins. They'll be making decisions out in Rio de Janeiro and Berne or Geneva, or wherever they might be in Switzerland, that will be to the detriment of our communities. Why? Because they're not from our communities. We need to find ways to encourage local ownership, or at least some control, of our natural resources.

So on this point I say to the government: You stand in this Legislature, as you've been standing over the last four or five years, making the argument that we need to get a better deal from Ottawa. I say that you have not done what you could do so that we can thrive here in Ontario and have the economy we need, so that we have the money to make the key investments that are necessary.

I look at an opportunity that came by at one point. The Harper government, when elected three years ago, instituted a reduction in the GST. They said they were going to reduce the GST by two points over a period of two or three years, whatever might be; that was their promise at the time. True to their word, the Conservatives got elected and reduced the GST by a total of two points.

The province of Ontario could have done something really simple to help with equalization and the amount of money we get back from Ottawa. We could have said, "All right, we'll shift that 2% to our PST." In other words, we would have increased our PST by a percentage equal to what the federal government reduced the GST. Ontario would have got roughly \$1 billion per percentage point above what we've got now and it would have been tax neutral. Ontarians would have had to pay no more—no new taxes—compared to what they were paying before.

In a funny kind of way, Stephen Harper, who did it for quite different reasons—you know, tax cuts aren't about trying to make the economy grow; they're about how you destroy government. The reality is that you have to have taxes and revenue from citizens and industry to have the dollars necessary so that you can provide infrastructure and do the things that are important for our society in how we care for each other through public education, public health care and others. When Mr. Harper said, "I'm cutting the GST," it wasn't about, "I want to prime the economy." He cut the GST by two points, and the economy went into the tank. We lost 200,000 jobs in the province of Ontario. So don't tell me—either the Conservatives or the Liberals, because they basically do the same thing on this—that tax cuts lead to prosperity.

I agree that you don't want to tax an economy when it's down. Increasing taxes is a difficult thing for any government to do, and I'm not advocating for a second hat we raise taxes. But my point is that Harper gave you an opportunity. If you, as a provincial government, truly

believed that you could have done something to assist Ontarians, you could have said, "Thank you, Mr. Harper, we'll take that 1%," and the next time he reduced the GST, "Thank you, Mr. Harper, we'll take the next 1%." Ontario today would have \$2 billion that it doesn't have now just by doing that tax shift, not an extra penny being paid by the consumers of Ontario.

I would argue to people: You got a 2% GST reduction. Do you really see a difference in your lives? Are people running out and buying more cars, building more houses, buying more consumer goods because there's a 2% GST reduction? Absolutely not. People are struggling, trying to make ends meet. That's where they're at. They're trying to maintain their mortgage payments, their car payments and basically living the life they've got to live. They don't have the ability to do what the government says they're going to as a result of tax decreases.

Again, here is another example where the provincial government could have done something on its own to try to equalize the fairness argument between the money we pay to Confederation from Ontario and the money we get back from Ottawa. We could have very simply said we're going to transfer the GST points over to the PST—tax neutral, \$2 billion. We could have helped our municipalities. Imagine that.

In this federal election, I look at the same argument that was going on in the last provincial election: Municipalities are starving. They've hardly got the money necessary to make the kinds of improvements they need to, when it comes to infrastructure. Municipalities across this province have crumbling infrastructure, and it's becoming more and more expensive to maintain it. Imagine if the provincial government had said, "Okay, we'll take that 2% and put 50% or 75% of that directly back into municipal infrastructure." It would have gone to the point that Mr. Runciman made, and I agree with him, although they're the authors of some of this: Municipalities have as much of an argument about fairness in how they're being treated by their senior level of government as we, as a province, have with the federal government. Clearly, municipalities are feeling the crunch. They have seen, over the last 10 or 15 years, a reduction in transfers from the province of Ontario, an increase in the roles they have to take in services they never used to have to deliver or pay for, and an overall reduction in the amount of money they used to get for infrastructure.

So I say that if there's a fairness argument to be made by the provincial government to Ottawa, maybe you should deal with things in your own backyard. Maybe, by example we can set in Ontario about how we treat our transfer partners, called municipalities, more fairly, we can look at ourselves in the mirror and say, "Well, we're doing it for our municipalities. We're a senior level of government. We believe in the fairness argument. We will treat our municipalities more fairly. Therefore, Ottawa, please help us."

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But no, we choose not to use the tools of government to help the economy. We don't use those opportunities

afforded us by the federal government when they reduced the GST. We don't treat our municipalities fairly when it comes to overall transfers. So excuse me when I say, as I started, this is a four-trick pony. This is what I'm getting at: This is really a phony argument. You always start in your backyard, and you do what you can do to make things better, and yes, go solicit the help of others. It's a little bit like the person who's trying to build a house or do a renovation in a house: You can stand at the fence and yell over to your neighbour to ask him to come and help you over and over again, and the neighbour, he or she, may come and they might help you, but it isn't going to get done unless you do it yourself. So you've got to put your tools on, roll up your sleeves and start doing some work. That's my argument: Ontario has to do what it has to do in order to help itself fix some of the problems that we have here in this province and help treat our municipalities fairly.

I want to talk a little bit about equalization because I find this quite an interesting and fascinating subject. First of all, I want to say that in all of the briefings I've had where I've gone to sit down with people at the federal or provincial levels, and people in academia, to talk about equalization, this is what I'm first told: "Oh, it's really complicated." "Oh, yeah? Well, can you give me the Coles Notes version so I understand how equalization really works in this country?" The next line you get is, "Well, there's, like, eight people in Canada who really understand it."

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Oh.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm being deadly serious. Hardly anybody understands the details about how equalization works. The sad part is, of the eight people who understand equalization, one's missing, and we don't know where he's gone. We can't even talk to him.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Who are they?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: There's only eight. I'm dead serious about this. So the point is that the equalization system in Canada is very complex, some of it for good reasons, some of it for bad reasons. For example, under unemployment insurance, our government argues that under Mr. McGuinty Ontario is being shortchanged when it comes to EI. Yes, that's true. But under equalization there are also some reasons for that. We used to be not a have-not province. So a province that was have-not, for example, as in the Maritimes, they had an easier time qualifying for EI because we tried to assist those seasonal economies that they had around the fishery and around other industries. Equalization, in a very complex way, said that if you live in Newfoundland and you don't have full-time jobs the way that they have in Ontario, and you have a seasonal economy, we will give Newfoundland more money per capita for unemployment insurance than they do in Ontario, Quebec or other provinces that are doing well. To argue strictly that Ontario is getting less money because we're not being treated fairly is a little bit beyond the pale. I agree—

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Oh, come on.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, hang on a second. I agree we need a better deal on employment insurance, and I'll get

to that in a minute. The point I'm making here is, don't say that the full amount that we're short is because we're being treated unfairly. It's the concept of equalization that says that the have-not province will get more because they need it more than the have province. Equalization, as I say, is a very complex thing, so let me propose this: In the end, is Mr. McGuinty saying that maybe we need to redo equalization or rethink it?

As an Ontarian, I want to be able to assist other provinces that need my help. I just put it out there. I'm not advocating that we do it, but I just put it out there: Should the discussion be about how we change equalization? I don't know. It's just something I put out there. I just make the point that equalization is quite a complex issue to understand for the best of us. I would argue that nobody in this Legislature, including myself, understands it. I challenge any member of this assembly to go get a briefing on equalization, because I've done that a couple of times and they can't explain to me. They always start, "Oh, it's too complicated. How long do you have? Can you sit here for a month? I'll take out the charts and show you." I say, "Well, is there anybody here who really understands this?" "Well, I understand this part of it, and this guy understands this part of it." There are, like, eight people in Canada who understand it, and one of them is missing. That was actually said to me when I went to a briefing, and I thought, "Boy, that was hilarious."

I just say to the government, come on, give me a break. If we're making the argument that Ontario needs to get a fairer share, let's understand that equalization was built at a time when Ontario was the powerhouse of Canada and we had an economy that was robust, that was strong, that created lots of wealth, we had lots of taxation and we were assisting provinces at the time that were not doing so well, such as the Maritimes.

A little side story: I was at a leadership event last Thursday in Orillia—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, no, listen to this: This is a funny story. I was there and I was listening to these two guys from Newfoundland who were at this conference that I was speaking at. As the two Newfoundlanders were starting to walk away, one turned to the other and said, "Ay, boy, it's about time we leave this have-not province and go back to somewhere they're really doing well." I thought that was really hilarious, because at one time, as I was growing up, Newfoundland was the one that was having trouble, but now we see with offshore oil and others that Newfoundland is actually doing better.

My point is that provinces, as far as their economic ability to sustain themselves, have really changed over the years. And so I say, is the Premier making the argument that we need to make changes to the equalization formula? Maybe that would be an interesting debate; I don't know. But he has not said that. Instead, he makes the argument that we need fairness. Well, equalization payments—the equalization program was about fairness. The difference is that the Ontario economy is not doing as well, and because we're not doing as well, we are now

becoming benefactors of equalization; we're now a have-not province. We're in a very different situation than we were under the times of Robarts and others, when equalization was developed.

I say to the government across the way again, this is a four-trick pony. We've been down this road before. Do we really need to have the debate that we're having today? It probably doesn't hurt to talk about it and get some ideas out there, but at the end of the day, if we, as a Legislature and a province—if our government doesn't take the tools that it has at its disposal to assist the economy, to build the robust economy that we need to generate the taxes we need to make the key investments we need to make in this province, what are you there for? What's the purpose of having the government if the government does not want to utilize the tools that it has? So I just say, it's an interesting argument that the government has to make on that particular issue.

On the issue of EI, I just want to say the following. There was a time in Ontario, not only in Ontario but in Canada generally, that when a person became unemployed, they got 60% of their wages by way of EI. At the time it used to be called unemployment insurance; it was a different program altogether. That's been changed through successive Conservative and Liberal governments in Ottawa to where we're now down to 55%, and also we've changed the qualification rules around EI, as it's called, but as they used to call it, unemployment insurance.

I believe it was under the Chrétien government—it might have been under Martin, but I believe it was under Chrétien—that they made the qualification for unemployment insurance go from so many weeks of work to so many hours. That has really diminished the number of people who are able to qualify for unemployment insurance. One of things that we're now seeing in Ontario is that there are far fewer people able to qualify for unemployment insurance once they get their pink slip at the job site because we've changed the qualification rules around unemployment insurance.

That should be the debate that we're having with the federal government. We shouldn't be talking a fairness argument in regard to how much Ontario gets as compared to other provinces. We should be joining forces with other provinces to say, "Manitoba, Quebec, British Columbia and other provinces in between there and Newfoundland, are we prepared to sit down and go to the federal government in order to change the rules around the qualification for unemployment insurance?"

There was a huge surplus in unemployment insurance that was gobbled up by the previous Liberal administration and continued through this current Conservative administration under Mr. Harper. So I say the argument is not that of fairness with unemployment insurance. The argument is the rules by which workers cannot qualify to receive unemployment insurance, because of the changing of the rules.

Here's a scary stat: In 1990, 80% of workers in the province of Ontario who became unemployed qualified

for unemployment insurance. Guess how much it is today? Forty percent. We've gone from an 80% group of people who can qualify for unemployment insurance to 40% as a result of changing the rules. So is it a question that Ontario is not being treated fairly as compared to other provinces? Absolutely not. The worker in PEI, Quebec or British Columbia has the same problem. Why? Because Conservative and Liberal governments in Ottawa have changed the rules for qualifying for unemployment insurance. So that's where we ended up.

We ended up getting less on unemployment insurance because of the whole concept of equalization: You give more money to the have-not province. And the federal governments under the Liberals and Tories have changed the rules for qualification, so workers are having a harder time qualifying for unemployment insurance; hence, less money coming to the province of Ontario.

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So is it a fairness argument? I think not. I think it's a policy issue, and it comes back to my point that, in the end, we need to do what we have to do as a province to assist our workers by helping to build a stronger economy.

I'd just ask a rhetorical question to the Premier, and I know the Premier is going to be watching the 11 o'clock rerun tonight. He always stays up to watch what I have to say because he's keenly interested as a good colleague. Actually, we got elected in the same year, so we're kind of like brothers, right? Well, maybe not my brother, but that's a whole other story.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: That's a stretch.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It was a bit of a stretch, but we come from the same class, as they say, the class of 1990.

But I ask you this: Is your strategy really working? Is Ontario any better off as a result of five years of basically going after the federal government and blaming them for our problems here in Ontario? I would argue marginally, a little bit, but not quite. It was a bit of a victory a couple of years ago, when they managed to get an extra couple of billion dollars as a result of a deal with the federal government. At the time Mr. McGuinty said, "Whoa, we finally got a great deal. This is wonderful, the best thing that ever happened since the time of Robarts." Remember him? He used to be Premier in this place once upon a time, back in the 1960s. The issue was going to go away because they had finally got this great deal, but he's back at it again. Why? Because Ontario is in a recession; it's not nice to say. The economy is having problems because of what's happening globally, because of what's happening in United States to a certain extent, but also because the decisions we've made in this province have not prepared us to weather the storm economically. If you look at other countries around the world, they are weathering the storm far better than Ontario. In fact, if you look at the provinces around this country, some of the other provinces are weathering the economic storm far better than us because they've positioned their industry and they've done the things they had to do as provincial governments to help weather that storm.

I look at Mr. Mauro, who shakes his head. I wouldn't be shaking my head coming from Thunder Bay, and I don't mean this as a partisan shot. Thunder Bay has got a terrible situation with regard to unemployment insurance—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson:—in regard to what's happened to joblessness. It's good to hear that he wants to enter the debate. I look forward to his opportunity to speak on behalf of the people of Thunder Bay.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan, come to order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: But I'm just saying that Thunder Bay is a good example that we have—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member from Timmins—James Bay, I'd like some order so that we can all hear the debate. Member from Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My point is that Thunder Bay has suffered what a lot of other communities in this province have suffered. We've seen it in Smooth Rock Falls, we've seen it in Opasatika and we've certainly seen it in Timmins. We see it in places like White River and Windsor; we see it all over. Basically, the manufacturing base has been going through huge, huge problems with regard to reductions of employment because of what's happening generally overall, and the forest industry has gone through the same. As a result, a lot of people have become unemployed.

We can point our finger all we want at the federal government. We can try to blame Stephen Harper, Jean Chrétien before him, Paul Martin after him or Jack Layton after the next election, but at the end of the day we need to do what we have to do as a government here in Ontario and as legislators to deal with the issues that are coming before us on a daily basis.

So I say to the government across the way, rather than throwing stones into somebody else's yard, maybe we should take a little more time to look at what we can do ourselves.

On a vu le jeu qui s'est amené avec ce qui s'est passé entre le gouvernement fédéral et le gouvernement provincial durant la dernière année. M. McGuinty avait décidé de continuer sa bataille avec le gouvernement fédéral faisant affaire avec son besoin de divertir envers le gouvernement fédéral l'attention sur le problème économique qu'on a en Ontario. Si on blâme le fédéral, si on dit que c'est de leur faute et que le gouvernement fédéral ne nous soutient pas bien autour les transferts à la province, on peut les blâmer lors de la prochaine élection.

Après cela, on a eu quoi? On a eu M. Flaherty, qui s'est promené autour de la province de l'Ontario en disant, « L'Ontario est un désastre; c'est une méchante place à investir ». Et les deux gouvernements ont commencé à se lancer la balle : le fédéral, qui blâme la province, et la province qui blâme le fédéral. Pourquoi? Parce qu'ils veulent divertir l'attention du monde pour ne

pas regarder le problème : regardez ici; ne regardez pas là.

Donc, c'est le plus vieux jeu qu'on voit dans cette confédération, où les gouvernements se lancent la balle pour se blâmer. D'une manière ou d'une autre, si on blâme l'autre, nous autres on ne prend pas la responsabilité. Comme Canadiens, on a besoin sérieusement de prendre notre responsabilité envers ce qu'on peut faire pour nous aider dans notre économie et ce qu'on peut faire pour nous aider à bâtir l'économie qui est nécessaire pour faire les investissements qu'on peut faire.

I want to end on this point, just as clearly as I can make it: I, as a New Democrat, agree that we need to always try to get a better deal from the federal government, and for that reason I'll vote for this motion.

As Ontarians, as municipalities, should we be trying to get a better deal? Of course. Municipal governments will do the same. They would vote for a motion like this in their municipal councils when it comes to how they're treated by the province of Ontario.

But I really want to warn the government. We've got to stop blaming the other guy for the problem. At one point, we need to accept that we as a government have tools at our disposal to help ourselves. We can do things to try to weather the storm in the economy that we're seeing as it unfolds over these troubling times in regard to what we're seeing in the market and what we've seen in the loss of jobs across this province. We need to utilize the tools of government. We cannot stand back and say it's the other guy's fault.

It is really interesting—and I said that earlier—to watch the Republican and Democratic candidates in the United States in the presidential election. I'm really having a problem trying to understand who's on the left over there, because all of a sudden they have started to understand—even George Bush has—that you cannot afford not to use the tools of government to protect your economy and do what needs to be done to assist your citizens.

We've seen, as John McCain would put it, the greed of Wall Street go to excesses, and as a result, Mr. Bush is now nationalizing some of the financial institutions in the United States. If somebody had told me even two months ago that George Bush would nationalize financial institutions in the United States, I would have said, "Never in a million years."

But even he understands—as much as I am diametrically opposed to 95% of what that man has done to the United States and the effect that he's had on the world, his own people, and even us as Canadians—that you have to use the tools of government; that government is a good thing; that government is there in order to be able to level out the playing field, as Mr. Mulroney used to say; that entrepreneurialism is good and capitalism is good, but there needs to be some rules of the road.

We need to utilize the tools that we have at our disposition to make sure that the excesses don't happen such as we have seen over the last little while, and that we take all possible opportunities availed to us by the

legislative authority that we have to make things better for Ontarians.

We could have done things around the auto sector. We have could have done things, and we can still do things, around the forestry and auto sectors and others to assist the Ontario economy and Ontarians. And to a degree, the government is doing some of that—not as much as I think needs to be done, but to a degree.

But if the government is not prepared to utilize all the tools at its disposal, I would just say, at the end of the day, it's a disservice to all of us here in this province.

With that, I look forward to the debate of other members.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member for Burlington.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'm pleased to stand up today in the House and speak to this issue. I find it interesting that a government which has proven its absolute limited ability to manage the finances of our province, this same government which has the honour of implementing the single largest tax increase in the history of the province of Ontario, this same McGuinty government which has driven the economic engine that used to drive our nation into last place amongst our Confederation partners—this same McGuinty government now wants our federal partners to hand over more money, derived from the exact same taxpayers, into our coffers here in Ontario.

I would argue—and I am certain that I have the support of my caucus colleagues—that the McGuinty government have not proven to be effective financial managers with the money they currently soak out of the hard-working taxpayers of Ontario.

I believe in fairness. I mean, who doesn't believe in fairness? I believe in fairness—

Interjection.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Pardon me? I believe in fairness for unemployed workers who currently receive \$4,630 less in benefits and supports than other Canadians in other provinces, but they would not be unemployed if Premier McGuinty and his government partners kept their factories open and reduced business taxes to make our province more competitive and more attractive to keeping businesses here, attracting new businesses—and investors to come back, once again, to Ontario.

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I believe in fairness for Ontario's public health care system, but before the Premier asks the federal government to bail him out, he should find out where the \$2.6 billion he receives from the health tax is going, because the people of Ontario can't see it.

I believe in fairness for our economy in southern Ontario. Unfortunately, it is under Dalton McGuinty's oppressive regulations and high taxation that our companies are packing up and leaving this province for more stable economies.

I believe in fairness for Ontario's infrastructure—funding that is being doled out hand over fist in Liberal-held ridings while the rest of Ontario turns into a giant pothole.

We believe in fairness for Ontarians as well. I think that Ontario deserves better, better than the McGuinty government is giving it. This resolution is dragging the good, proud name of Ontario through the mud. We have always been a proud province, a province that has given our fellow provinces a helping hand when they went through the same tough times or were not as blessed as we are with our natural resources, our entrepreneurial businesses and our absolutely fantastic workforce. Essentially, the Premier wants us to go begging, hat in hand, to our federal counterparts. Well, isn't that a lot easier than developing effective initiatives that work right here in our own province?

I liken this to a young adult who has just smashed up a brand new family car and is now demanding that I hand over the keys to yet another vehicle. I imagine my response would be to say, "You destroyed the first one you got, so why should I give you another one?"

Agreed, our economy is tied to the United States, which is experiencing a huge economic turndown. This is not a news flash, folks. We have known this for quite some time. In fact, on this side of the House, we've been talking about it for over a year, but it's falling on deaf ears.

The responsible thing to do, as a government, is to try to keep the businesses we have left right here in Ontario so that Ontarians continue to have jobs. What does the Ministry of Labour do? They walk in and shut down a plant that employed people and injected a lot of money into our economy, and forced them to move their business south of the border to the United States—no warning, nothing; just shut their doors and walked away.

How can this be allowed to happen in Ontario during these tough economic times? Clearly, the power has gone to the government's head. This government that prides itself on its compassion is running roughshod over Ontarians and their communities.

Guaranteed, Premier McGuinty isn't going to be invited to ring the bell at the Toronto Stock Exchange any time soon. What Premier McGuinty fails to realize is that it is not just about equalization. It is another E word; it is about the economy, an economy that he has spent one term pillaging and neglecting.

Stop blaming the feds, stop blaming the US economy, stop blaming the world markets, and stop blaming the fact that we're not oil-rich in this province. I think the blame needs to be placed on, and the responsibility needs to be taken by, the Premier himself. This is a problem which he has created: the high taxes that Ontarians now enjoy in this province, the skyrocketing energy prices and the overregulation that is driving businesses out of our province, out of our communities. Ontario has been slipping since Mr. McGuinty came to office. The proof is in the facts.

Last year, Mr. McGuinty called the new equalization formula a great success for Ontario. Well, what happened since 2007 to 2008? Now we have a handout. If McGuinty was so concerned about Ontario, he would denounce the carbon tax, a tax that would create even

more financial hardships for Ontario families. Where was Premier McGuinty when the federal Liberals cut transfers to Ontario? I don't remember hearing Mr. McGuinty being outraged. Oh, yes, he's stumping for his brother. I think it's great that the Premier won't be backing any particular horse in this federal election, or so he said, until I heard the end of his speech this afternoon. Well, that's great news. Once again the Premier and I are in agreement, if he follows through with that statement. I definitely want Ontarians to pick the candidate they know will best stand up for them, and I doubt the voters will be duped by the Liberals twice in two years.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member for Timiskaming—Cochrane.

Mr. David Ramsay: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak on this issue. I hear the varying views of the folks in this House, and especially those in the opposition, and I guess I would like to make a plea to my colleagues on the other side that this is really just about fairness.

The previous speaker talked about Ontario having to beg. That's not the case at all. I think the easiest way to explain what has happened here is that right across Canada, this wonderful country of ours—we're all citizens of this country, including those who live in Ontario. I think it's Ontario's position, it's this government's position and the position of Premier McGuinty that all Canadians should be treated fairly, all Canadians should be treated equally, so why shouldn't an unemployed worker in Ontario receive the same amount of assistance from her government as an unemployed worker in British Columbia, Manitoba, Quebec or Newfoundland? That's what we're talking about. Why would Ontario be penalized? The worker here in Ontario, when suddenly found unemployed, has the same challenges as a worker anywhere else in this country and deserves the same support from her government. We expect Ottawa to live up to that. Why are we short in Ontario, as Canadians, \$800 million in regard to health care transfers? Why shouldn't every Ontarian expect that their federal government would make sure every Canadian right across this country, regardless of what province they live in, receives their fair share of the taxpaying money that we all contribute, regardless of where we live in this country? Really it's a fairness issue, and that's what we're trying to say. That's the plea the Premier is making to the federal party leaders. I certainly hope they respond to his letter, because I think Ontarians need to know where all the parties stand in regard to this.

I'm not sure of the history of why this got out of whack. I guess it's because there was such a difference in the affluence in this country between provinces. Ontario was always known in the past as being the fat-cat province. We had all of the manufacturing, and most of the other provinces had to struggle. Ontario governments of the past and Ontarians saw themselves as Canadians first. We have always wanted to contribute to this country to make sure that regardless of where Canadians live in this country, we all receive the same services that we've all fought for over the years. We want people in

every province to have the same quality of health care, to have the same quality of the highways to drive upon. We've always fought for that and always wanted to, and want to continue to, contribute. What we now say, though, is that if the circumstances change in this country between have and have-not provinces, there should be a formula that's equitable, that treats all Canadians the same. Canadians living in this great province should deserve the very same treatment that Canadians living in other provinces receive.

We know that we have a huge infrastructure deficit across this country, and yet we receive about a billion dollars less in fair share of infrastructure investment in Ontario than we should be getting. We deserve that. This is one of the main economic engines, not the only one, of this country. If we're going to generate the tax dollars for this country and Canadians right across this country, we need to make sure that this economic engine is as strong as the economic engine in Alberta, or the economic engine that now is finally roaring at great speed in Newfoundland. We're very pleased that other parts of the country are now doing so well.

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We're looking at equity; we're looking at fairness. That's what this is about, and I would ask that the members of this Legislature put down their partisan swords in this case, if you will, because this is not a partisan issue. The Premier was very careful in crafting this resolution so that it would appeal to Ontarians of all political stripes, so that we can come together on this and say, "We need to be treated fairly. We need to be treated equally by our federal government." With that, it should be an issue in this federal campaign for the leaders of all of the parties to debate and discuss.

In the end, Ontarians are going to be choosing a great proportion of the people who will represent us in Parliament. Ontarians should have all of that information, and as is their right, they should be demanding from those candidates their views on the issue of fairness when it comes to this.

Mr. Paul Miller: New Democrats broadly support the aims of this motion to call on the federal government to make substantial changes to employment insurance, to fast-track health transfers and to create a federal economic development plan for southern Ontario.

We want to devote our debate time to employment insurance. It is an issue we've been focusing on from the very beginning. With so many jobs heading south under this government's watch, employment insurance benefits are even more important. We agree that unemployed Ontarians don't get their fair share, but that's not the whole story.

Major cuts to the EI program began to happen in the early 1990s. They started with the federal Conservatives, who reduced the maximum income replacement rate to 57%, down from 60%, with Bill C-113 in 1993. In 1994, the new federal Liberal government began its social security review. Out of that came radically altered legislation, the Employment Insurance Act. Some of the

changes included changing eligibility from weeks to hours, doubling the number of working hours required to qualify for EI, reducing the replacement rate to 55% and the benefit period—questionable—and reducing maximum insurable earnings.

A significant increase in the number of working hours required to qualify for EI has drastically changed who qualifies and who gets benefits. In 1990, 80% of unemployed workers were covered by EI; by 2004, coverage had fallen to 40%. Conservative and Liberal governments reduced benefits to the unemployed.

Not surprisingly, the changes have systematically and disproportionately affected women, new immigrants and others in precarious forms of employment. Forty per cent of women in the labour market work in a non-standard work arrangement, compared to 30% of men. The increase in the number of qualifying hours forces workers in non-standard work arrangements—disproportionately women—out of EI eligibility. Similar trends have been found in other socioeconomic groups where non-standard worker arrangements are common. A study in 2000 showed that 31% of unemployed non-immigrants received EI benefits, compared to only 23% of recent immigrants. The same study found that while 30% of non-immigrant women have collected EI benefits, only 19% of immigrant women benefited.

At the same time, average incomes are higher. In 2006, the median income in Ontario was \$67,000, second to Alberta. Because incomes are higher, the total premiums paid are higher. Ultimately, the combination of the regressive overhaul of the employment insurance system with higher average incomes is the reason Ontarians, as a whole, receive less EI benefits per capita than others. Ontario is home to a significantly higher number of new immigrants and other types of unstable work not covered by EI.

So yes, on unemployment, Ontario workers are being shortchanged by \$4,630 on a per capita basis, but it is the McGuinty government's federal cousins, carrying out EI changes started by the Conservatives, who are directly responsible for this. Premier McGuinty likes to blame Mr. Harper for this problem. Conservatives certainly share some responsibility, but it was his Ottawa counterparts—Jean Chrétien, Paul Martin, Stéphane Dion and company—who made it more difficult for unemployed workers—disproportionately women, immigrants and other marginalized workers—to qualify for employment insurance. Conservative and Liberal policies are the root cause of Ontario's EI woes.

So the real question now is, who should Ontarians trust to get the job done on employment insurance? Over 20,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost since the McGuinty Liberals came to power. Ontarians know this government can't be trusted to protect their jobs. The Liberals can't be trusted to protect workers after they receive their layoff notices, either. This has been witnessed in Hamilton. Thousands and thousands of qualified people have been laid off, without jobs. The Conservatives are no better, watching auto plant after auto plant lay off

workers in southern Ontario, only to offer help on the eve of an election.

The McGuinty Liberals haven't tabled what they want out of EI reform—no mention of reducing the number of hours required to qualify or increasing the income replacement rate, just some gimmicky phrases here and there. The Premier's federal cousins aren't proposing any substantial reforms either. Nowhere in the federal Liberal platform is there any mention of reducing the number of working hours required to qualify; nowhere is there any mention of increasing the income replacement rate; nothing in the 76-page document to help out women and men struggling to build a better life for their families. In other words, even if the Liberal Party of Canada keeps its platform promises, it won't be making employment insurance fairer for Ontarians.

But why should we be surprised? It was the federal Liberals who made it difficult to qualify in the first place. If Mr. McGuinty is serious about supporting a party that believes in EI fairness, he should call on Ontarians to vote NDP. New Democrats have consistently said that EI is broken and needs to be repaired, and that it fails Ontario workers and their families. The only party to put a real proposal forward during the last federal election was the NDP. We proposed to reduce the number of working hours to 360, down from an upwards of 700 required now. We proposed setting a real target on EI coverage back to an 80% level, before the Liberals put the axe to the program in the mid-1990s.

There is no reason for voters to trust the Conservatives and Liberals on employment insurance. Federal Conservatives and Liberals broke it and, 15 years later, after a Conservative Prime Minister comes to power, provincial Liberals propose that it should be fixed. But their federal counterparts don't think it's important enough to put our proposals in their platform. It is a complicated story, with a simple message: The federal and provincial Liberals cannot be trusted to protect workers. They haven't protected jobs from leaving this province, and they haven't protected workers when the jobs leave.

It seems like the McGuinty government is a one-trick pony. Whenever there is a need to deflect blame or distract people's attention, the \$20-billion number gets tossed around in this House, every day. "It's the federal government's fault," they say. The real reason McGuinty is causing a distraction these days is the fact that 225,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs have been lost since the McGuinty government came to power. The unemployment rate is up, and many economists are predicting a recession. Is Ontario getting its fair share? No. But what's interesting is the timing of the campaign. After the Harper Conservatives' 2007 budget, there was a virtual love-in between Mr. McGuinty and Mr. Harper. Here's what members of the McGuinty government said:

"It was the Premier who took on this issue and it was the Premier who negotiated the greatest improvements to fiscal fairness since the era of Lester Pearson and John Robarts. In recent weeks, we have reached agreement on federal funding for the environment and for public

transit. That agreement is evidence that when the governments work together, we make real progress”—Greg Sorbara, budget speech, 2007.

“Since we like to lay claim to the fact that Ontario is both the heart of Canada and the economic engine of Canada, this is certainly ... a great day for Canada. It’s a great day for our environment and our economy. It’s a great day, as well, for Ontario’s fight for fairness”—Premier McGuinty, March 7, 2007.

Another quote from the Premier: “Absolutely nothing can cool the warm enthusiasm we all share today.”

After the Conservative budget, the McGuinty Liberals proclaimed victory. Finally, Ontarians would see the end of the endless fairness campaign. But when thousands of workers were given pink slips in towns across this province, the McGuinty government had to do something—something to show his government was on top of things. So what did he do? He went back to the good old fairness campaign; after all, it’s a proven distraction strategy that has worked in the past.

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So only about a year after proclaiming victory, celebrating the success of his campaign, calling it a great day for Canada, Mr. McGuinty launched a new campaign, a slick website, letter writing, a media blitz, a petition and a candidate information sheet. Distracting Ontarians from the economy is a lot of work. But Ontarians won’t be distracted by flashy websites and cheap gimmicks. They want the Premier to take real action considering the economy. He tries to convince Ontarians that these policies are working. But Ontarians’ day-to-day realities paint a far different picture.

The NDP has proposed three real actions this government could be taking to stem losses now: introduce a refundable manufacturing investment tax credit to reward companies that create jobs; introduce a Buy Ontario program to ensure that billions of dollars spent on public infrastructure would employ Ontario workers—wouldn’t it be a shame to go forward with a \$50-billion transit plan and not keep investment in our province?—and lastly, introduce an industrial hydro rate like they have in Quebec and Manitoba to soften the impact of sky-high energy prices. The NDP has a real plan that can be implemented immediately to deal with the economic downturn, to provide a needed boost to Ontario’s economy. But the McGuinty government has rejected them all. He said no to concrete actions proven to work in other jurisdictions. Instead of real actions on the economy, real actions that improve the lives of Ontarians, we get a recycled fairness campaign.

I’ve sat and watched our economy crumble in the last few months. It’s worse in the States. I was just in Philadelphia and they are very frightened in the States, the way things are going. Ohio is going to be hit very hard; they’re a car manufacturing area too. It’s trickling over the border slowly, but it is definitely going to get worse before it gets better. I hope that this government sees the future unfolding in front of them and does something immediately, not when it’s said and done,

throwing bad money after bad money. We have to have sound investments. We have to have commitments from companies that they’re going to stay in Ontario, that they’re going to protect jobs, that they’re not going to get handouts and then leave, close shop and go back to where they come from. They have to invest in equipment, manpower and the communities they open up in. We’re looking for stability. We’re looking for investment. We’re looking for large manufacturers to come to Ontario.

I can say that in the last 20 years, we’ve probably lost 40 to 60 major manufacturers in the city of Hamilton—and not one has opened. At last count, we were approaching 20,000 jobs lost in the Hamilton region—20,000. Do you know, Mr. Speaker, what impact that has on a community of 500,000? For every one of those workers, it affects three other people. Twenty per cent of the people in my area are living below the poverty level. What do you tell these people? What’s their future?

You can retrain people—and that’s good. Training is good as long as they have jobs to go to in Ontario. But if you train them, and they go out west to the tar sands or they go east to the oil rigs or they go south to the States for jobs, how is that benefiting Ontario? We spend the money to train them and they go somewhere else to work. It doesn’t add up to me. We’ve got a long way to go. We’ve got to start attracting big business to this province. I know what they do in the southern states. They give them land for free. They help them set up. They don’t have to pay taxes for two or three years when they open up; they give incentives. Not just handing out taxpayers’ money; they give the businesses incentives to come to their communities. We don’t do a lot of that. We need to do more of it. You give them incentives and they’ll come. If you tax them into the ground, or you’re going to close them up, then they are going to leave.

What you need is incentives, and the incentives aren’t throwing money, hundreds of millions of dollars, at the auto industry and them saying, “Oh, sorry. We were going to hire those 500 people at Ford but now we’re not going to hire them,” and then three months later, after I got chastised by the government for saying, “Nothing’s happening,” what happened last week? Gee, another 500 on top of the 500 who didn’t get the jobs they were promised. Another 500 are on the street, and it’s getting worse and worse by the minute.

Until we take solid action, until we really go after this situation, we’re in big trouble. I think we’ve got to wake up and smell the roses.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I won’t take long. In fact, I’m happy that the member from Timmins–James Bay is back because actually I didn’t intend on speaking today, but most of what I have to say—it won’t take me long—is in regard to some of the comments that he put on the floor in regard to this fairness debate that is before us today.

A fair bit of the time being taken by the other two parties today is talking about this motion in the context of blaming the federal government and us using it to deflect

from the economic challenges that are occurring in Ontario today. It's quite the opposite. We are not trying to deflect away. We understand that there is a series of variables affecting the economy in Ontario just as they are affecting the economies of other areas in North America. It's not about shifting blame. It is, as so well put by David Ramsay not long ago, the member from Timiskaming, simply about addressing fairness. He listed very well the three key components—unemployment insurance, infrastructure and health care—that amount to a significant number of dollars that are not coming back to Ontario from the federal government. It's simply an issue of fairness.

As was said, the Premier went to great lengths to frame the motion that's before us today so that the issue could be addressed in as non-partisan a manner as possible. Unfortunately, that hasn't been the case today.

We heard the member from Timmins—James Bay in his remarks once again talk about tools at the disposal of the provincial government in regard to the forest industry and continue to say, as they have been for three or four years, that other provinces are doing much better than Ontario in this particular sector. I've listened to this language from that particular party for three or four years. When they first started making this argument, the comparator they used was the province of Quebec. At that time, their leader would stand up on an almost daily basis and tell us that what we needed to fix the forest industry in Ontario was a lower energy rate. He would often compare Ontario to Quebec because Quebec does have lower energy prices. As we all know, Quebec has lower energy prices because they are very fortunate. Topographically, most of their energy is produced hydraulically. It's a cheaper way to produce energy. They don't rely on nuclear or other forms; they don't have that capital cost billed. So they have been fortunate topographically to be able to provide energy historically in that province for quite a long time at a very cheap rate.

That is true, but what is not true, and where the argument goes off the rails—in the province of Quebec the forest industry since 2003 or 2001, as far back as you want to go, is not doing better than the forest industry in Ontario. In fact, if you compare the job numbers, the job losses and the number of mill closures in Quebec, where the energy rates are lower, you'll find that there are more closures and more job losses in the province of Quebec in the forest products sector than there are in Ontario.

Now, I think somewhere along the line, this fact occurred to the leader of the third party. I'll take the member from Timmins—James Bay at his word that when he stood today and made these comments that he truly believed them to be true, but they're not. I think his leader discovered this somewhere along the line about a year or two ago. If you're interested and you check the Hansard, you will see that somewhere along the line he stopped using Quebec as his comparator when he discussed the forest products industry relative to what's going on in Ontario. I think it occurred to him and he became aware of the fact that there are significant job

losses in that sector in Quebec and that there are as many or more plant closures in Quebec. So to stand and suggest that there are tools at the disposal of Ontario that we're not using relative to what's going on in Quebec is just simply not the case.

When they discovered that Quebec could no longer be used as the comparator, the shift came to where? They were going to start to compare Ontario's forest products sector to Manitoba's, a ridiculous comparison; an absolutely ridiculous comparison to compare a sector the size of what exists in Ontario to what goes on in Manitoba. So that's where it shifts, and this is what they've tried to do now to make it look as if we haven't brought significant resource to the table to support the forest products industry in Ontario, when it's quite the opposite.

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On the energy piece, we have brought in a significant program to support the industry, and there are success stories in northwestern Ontario. We all understand and empathize with the people who have lost their jobs, who have worked in those mills and pulp and paper mills and sawmills for 20 and 30 years, 40 years. We live it every day in our communities. We know how difficult it has been on those families.

But we have brought resource to this sector that has mitigated the damage. You can go to Terrace Bay, where a pulp and paper mill is open today, reopened as a result of a program that we brought to the table. It's employing 450 people. You can go to Fort Frances, in the riding of the leader of the third party, where we gave them a \$22-million grant that has led to an \$85-million cogeneration project that stabilized not only a mill but an entire town. I've met their mayor and councillors at AMO conferences as long as one or two years ago, and they continually thank our government for the programs we've brought to the table in the forest industry.

Unfortunately, not even the leader of the third party, when a mill in his own community has probably been saved from closure by one of our programs, that's stabilized an entire town—do you even hear him stand up once and say maybe there was something good that went on?

We need to separate the forest industry into two halves. There's the pulp and paper side and there's the sawmilling side. But they don't do that when they talk about the forest industry; they lump it all together. Anybody who has paid any attention to this issue knows that they're very different. People know that on the sawmilling side, there's very little impact from the provincial government on this particular industry. They know that it is not energy intensive, and if they're telling you that it is, they're being disingenuous, because it's not. They should know and understand that the factors that affect the sawmilling side are more of a federal nature, although we have still brought resource to the table to help them. The softwood lumber agreement is the primary thing affecting that industry, the primary thing, as is the collapse of the housing market in the United States and the price of the Canadian dollar. People know this, but

they pretend that it doesn't exist. They want to ignore it and perpetuate this myth that in Ontario the collapse of the forest industry is all the fault of the provincial government.

We've got candidates who run in the northwest in a provincial election and then next they run in a federal election. Then they run provincial and then they run federal and, depending on what election they're running in, it's that particular government's fault. When they're in a provincial election, it's the provincial government's fault; when they're in a federal election, it's the federal government's fault.

The fact of the matter is, I agree with them on the fed side. The feds haven't brought anything to the table. The feds have not brought anything to the table, not a penny. So we've got a mill right now—it's in the clippings today. You can open the paper and you'll find it today. This particular mill, to which we brought \$15 million or \$16 million of resource in our program, it's there. They're still feeling a challenge and they say today, five, seven years later, they haven't received a penny of support from the federal government. So they want to ignore these. They want to pretend and suggest that there are challenges there.

I should mention one of our programs, the roads uplifting program. In about 1993, over three or four years \$225 million was a particular cost that was downloaded onto the forest industry by the New Democratic Party. We have brought back that \$225 million on that particular piece. It's a program that came into being about three years ago.

So it's just a bit rich to listen not just today but for three or four years on this particular topic, this continuing misrepresentation of what's gone on with forestry in the province of Ontario. It's wrong.

But back to the point: We have a motion before us today that has been appropriately stated by people on our side of the House, which we'd hoped to have presented and debated in a non-partisan manner. Unfortunately, that didn't happen yet today. There's still an opportunity. There's still an opportunity, and I think you have time—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I think you still have some time left on the clock where you can express your support for the motion that's before us today, and perhaps you will when you stand up and vote and support the debate. In fact, I think I did hear the member state in his remarks that they were supportive of the intent of the motion, so I take him at his word and I thank him for that.

At the end of the day, that's simply what this is all about: It's not about shifting blame; it's about getting about a billion dollars in infrastructure annually that doesn't come to Ontario; it's about getting about \$800 million annually in health care that doesn't come to Ontario; and it's about getting about \$4,600 per unemployed worker that doesn't come to Ontario. The historical arrangements really are irrelevant to me on the unemployment side. If you're unemployed in Ontario and you can't get a job, does it matter to you that you're in an

economy that historically has performed better? If you're laid off for six months or a year, does it matter to you now that you're going to get \$4,600 less? Of course it doesn't.

Just a short time ago, we contributed \$1.1 billion, through the Investing in Ontario Act, to municipalities in the province of Ontario for infrastructure, and we've got another billion out there that we're saying on an annual basis we don't get from the federal government—\$1.1 billion. In my communities, in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan, that meant somewhere on an order of magnitude of about \$12 million or \$13 million. In the city of Thunder Bay, \$1 million roughly equates to 1% on the residential property tax base. We brought about \$13 million to Thunder Bay and district through that one time. This is what we're talking about. This is what we can do. And I know the members opposite benefited from those investments as well.

We saw when we came to office in 2003 that there were three deficits: fiscal, infrastructure and service. We've gone a long way to trying to address the infrastructure deficit—another billion dollars on an annual basis from the federal government. Whatever governments are responsible for the historical arrangements that we have to work with today, to me, are relatively unimportant. What we have before us is here today. We've got to deal with it. Whether it was a Conservative federal government or a Liberal federal government, we've got a situation today that we need to deal with. We're trying to get some fairness for Ontario.

As has been stated by other speakers, one hundred and—what's the number? How many federal MPs are elected in the province of Ontario?

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's 103.

Mr. Bill Mauro: So 103 or 106 federal MPs will be elected on October 14 in the province of Ontario. I think it behooves all of us to do what we can to see that they are paying attention to this particular debate, and hopefully we will see a different result from whatever government comes into power on October 14.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I just want to take a few minutes today and make a few comments. I think, as many speakers have indicated, obviously a principle of fairness is one that we would all agree with, and, as always, it's a question of the details. But I want to look also from the point of view that there is only one taxpayer, and I think when you look at it from the point of view of the individual taxpayer, yes, those individual taxpayers want fairness as well. They also want to have confidence, in whatever level of government, that they are providing the kind of leadership that they believe is appropriate. One of the things that I hear when people listen to members of different levels of government talk about each other is the fact that it appears like there's just a big whining noise. That's where people think that they can off-load their own responsibility and talk about what they think someone else should be doing. So when I listen to those individuals in my riding and in the communities at large,

it seems to me that they recognize that decisions that all levels of government make are complex and that they are costly. But what they really want to know is that people they elect are operating in a responsible and fair way.

I think that's one of the problems that, when we get into the kinds of analysis and numbers that many of the members who have spoken today talk about—obviously they're very complex. One of the former speakers talked about there being only eight people in Canada who understand these complex relationships, and I think that is probably pretty close to the truth.

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But I think it's more important that we be able to demonstrate what, frankly, people are looking for. They want those they elect to be good managers. They want people to be talking about ideas and a prosperity agenda. They want to know that people have a vision of looking at an educated workforce, of dealing with shortages in particular trades, of meeting the challenge of apprenticeship and providing the appropriate funding for community colleges to make sure that their children and grandchildren are able to be part of that educated workforce. They want a competitive tax structure. They understand that we are in a global economy. They know that that is a key to making sure there are jobs here. They want to make sure that there's a regulatory environment that is balanced, that provides safety, but also that it isn't a burden, that it isn't something that is more than people can cope with. So it's in the context, then, of being good managers who spend wisely, act prudently and look for the ways by which they can stand up for Ontario. But that means that you're designing programs from the perspective of the individual citizen, not the silos of government; and it means that you do more than complain about the other levels of government.

I think it's those concepts that, frankly, people are looking for. When they make their decisions to vote, they're looking for someone who is going to understand where they are coming from and what those particular issues are that they value. So I think that, while fairness is something that obviously we all agree with, we also have to accept the fact that we can't be accused of chining.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my pleasure to have a few minutes to comment on this motion put forward by the government. Again, my colleagues from Hamilton East—

Stoney Creek and from Timmins–James Bay both did a great job in terms of outlining some of the issues. But I have to tell you that it sends me into fits of giggles when I look at a government that talks about fairness when they turn around and don't know how to apply that concept in their own backyard.

I know that there are concerns with the federal government, and certainly we would agree that this issue needs to be raised, but look at what the provincial government is doing to municipalities. Talk about lack of fairness. Holy smokes, the previous government downloaded all kinds of stuff onto the municipal level, and here, with this government, after five years, very little of that has been addressed. In fact, there are still considerable problems in terms of the fiscal relationship that exists between the province and municipalities, everything from court security costs to Ontario Works, particularly the administration costs, and other things.

But I have to say, the other thing that I found quite amusing—other than the glass house syndrome, where the government is living in a glass house and they're throwing stones at another level of government, another order of government—was hearing the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan talking about how he doesn't want to go and blame other governments from other decades and decisions they've made, and then he turned around and blamed another government for a decision that they made. So it's kind of interesting how they talk one talk but their actions are quite a bit different in terms of the way they deal with their own responsibilities as a government.

I believe I'm out of time, and there's not much more to say except that, living in a glass house, you can't throw stones. Let's get this government to stop distracting or trying to distract the people of Ontario and get down to business not only in terms of fiscal relationships with another order of government called the municipal level, but also deal with the economy, deal with the job loss and deal with the growing poverty in the province of Ontario.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I don't have my pocket watch with me, but I'm sure that if I did, it would say that it is 5:45 of the clock. This House is adjourned until 9 of the clock, Thursday, September 25.

The House adjourned at 1745.

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of Ontario**

First Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 39^e législature



**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 25 September 2008

Jeudi 25 septembre 2008

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 25 September 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 25 septembre 2008

*The House met at 0900.
Prayers.*

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SERVICES AND SUPPORTS TO PROMOTE THE SOCIAL INCLUSION OF PERSONS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LES SERVICES ET SOUTIENS FAVORISANT L'INCLUSION SOCIALE DES PERSONNES AYANT UNE DÉFICIENCE INTELLECTUELLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 24, 2008, on the motion for third reading of Bill 77, An Act to provide services to persons with developmental disabilities, to repeal the Developmental Services Act and to amend certain other statutes / *Projet de loi 77, Loi visant à prévoir des services pour les personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle, à abroger la Loi sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle et à modifier d'autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate? The member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: As I was speaking yesterday, when we started the debate, I believe I had spoken for some 10 or 12 minutes, and the balance will be today. I refer to these as my bifurcated speeches, and it seems to me that I've had a whole lot of those over my seven years in this House—speeches that you begin one day and end another.

On the last occasion I was talking about the preamble and about the necessity that—I believe—a preamble should be contained within the body of this bill. I am not alone in that thought, because after we had gone through committee, Community Living Ontario wrote a very good four-page paper outlining a critique of this particular bill and what had happened in committee. I would like to quote them and what they said at the bottom of page 3. They wrote, "One recommendation called for by 25 groups and individuals who presented at the hearings was the need for a preamble to the legislation. We are very disappointed that a preamble was not included and frankly, we are surprised because this seemed like a simple amendment that would have greatly enriched the bill."

I could not concur any more than that. In fact, I want to tell you how disappointed all of us were at committee when it was determined by the government members that there would not be a preamble or a purpose clause contained within the body of this bill.

What had been proposed—and was proposed by the New Democratic Party—was very simple. I'd like to read it into the record because it perplexes me as to why the government does not want to proceed with the preamble or a purpose clause. What was proposed said as follows:

"0.1 The purposes of this act are,

"(a) to recognize that the inclusion of all residents of Ontario, including persons with developmental disabilities, is the foundation of a strong Ontario;

"(b) to promote the delivery of services to persons with developmental disabilities so that the services are,

"(i) available at a consistent level across the province, and

"(ii) based on person-centred planning to assist the person and his or her personal network to plan for a life in the community; and

"(c) to ensure that core mandated services are provided to persons with developmental disabilities."

It seemed passing strange to me, and I think to all of the people who were present in that room, that the government chose not to proceed on that line. In fact, questions were asked of the solicitor, Mr. Wood, who was present, to outline what a purpose clause or a preamble might do. Mr. Wood, in his wisdom as counsel to the Legislature, stated, and I quote him in one large part:

"There are two things to distinguish here: One is a preamble, and this motion does not add a preamble; the other is a purpose clause. The purpose clause is part of the bill and certainly therefore affects the interpretation of the bill. As I understand it, Mr. Ramal is saying that the amendments the government is proposing deal with the issues in the purpose clause. All I can say, from a neutral point of view, is that a purpose clause does affect the interpretation of a bill, and there is some danger that if something is in the purpose clause and is not in the content of the bill, the purpose clause could affect the content of the bill. Conversely, if all of the amendments are in the bill, then a purpose clause, in a way, becomes redundant."

It went on, Ms. Elliott from the Conservatives asked further questions and in the end the members of the Liberal Party voted it down.

Now, I have to question—and I think everyone, including those from Community Living and especially

those who support this bill have to ask—why the government does not want the provisions in there. Does the government not want to recognize that the inclusion of all residents of Ontario, including persons with developmental disabilities, is the foundation of a strong Ontario? I find it very strange that the government would not want to make this statement. Certainly the minister and the parliamentary assistant said very flowery things the other day, but it seems they don't want to enshrine that in the legislation. I'm perplexed why they would not. Does the government not want to promote the delivery of services to persons with developmental disabilities so that the services are available at a consistent level across the province? I will deal with this later, but I know they don't want to do that, because a motion was made to that effect, that the services be consistent across the province, that they not just be available in large cities but that they be available in small towns, in rural areas and in the far north. The government opposed that provision too. So I think I understand why they didn't want this provision in the bill.

0910

The government also was opposed to, or appears to be opposed to, the provision that the delivery of services to persons with developmental disabilities is based on person-centred planning to assist the person and his or her personal network for a life in the community. In fact, they tweaked the words to make sure that "person-centred planning" was changed to "person-centred direction." I believe that was the way they wanted to go.

Finally, I don't know why they would be opposed to this, but they appear to be: "to ensure that core-mandated services are provided to persons with developmental disabilities."

A preamble, a purpose clause, is essential in legislation. It is essential because from that everything else flows. So if there is an interpretation in the courts or if the judges are called upon to deal with it, they read, first of all, the preamble or the purpose clause and then they reflect on the true meaning of the bill. Sometimes words, especially legal words, are hard to understand. But if you understand the preamble, you know the purpose of the legislation and everything that flows from it.

Of course, people would know the preamble to our own Constitution, promising peace, order and good government, and living next to the United States, you would know the preamble "We, the people, in order to form a more perfect union" and things that flow from that is the hallmark of the American Constitution. You will know that many bills in Ontario have a preamble or a purpose clause in order for the courts and others interpreting the law to better understand it and come to the correct conclusions.

It's not just the judges and lawyers who use a preamble clause; it's those who work in the service industry surrounding people with developmental disabilities. They need to understand what the purpose is as well, and it needs to be clearly articulated, but the government does not want to articulate it. I can only concur with those who

are disappointed. I can only concur with the 25 people who came forward with deputations—that's 25 out of about 100—who named this as a fundamental aspect of what they were requesting. I thank Community Living for putting it in writing and providing the disappointment they have, and I'm sure that is shared literally by everyone, that this government has chosen not to include a purpose clause or a preamble.

The second thing—and I think this is also very disappointing to a lot of people—is that this legislation enshrines waiting lists. I know that it is contained in a couple of other pieces of legislation, including the provision of social housing in Ontario, but it is a rather rare phenomenon to actually enshrine waiting lists in the body of legislation—to state that there will be waiting lists. I think what the government here is admitting is that there will not be sufficient monies after this bill is passed for there ever not to be a waiting list; that for all times eternal, as long as this bill survives, there will be a waiting list, people will be put on it and they will wait anywhere from a day to a month to a year to a decade in order to get service. The government is enshrining this to make sure that it is the law that there will be a waiting list.

We were very dissatisfied, and I believe my Conservative colleagues as well were dissatisfied, that there will be a waiting list, and we tried on three separate occasions to convince the government to take this out of the bill. I know there was some considerable sympathy from the government backbenchers and the parliamentary assistant to see whether there was a way around this, to see whether there was some way, but in the end, the government members, all five of them, voted against take waiting lists out of this legislation.

Just for the record, I'd like to talk about what was proposed; of course, all of this ultimately failed. The first motion was made by my colleague Mr. Miller. This was motion 18, simply asking that paragraph 3 of section 7(2) of the bill be struck out. That won't mean a lot to anyone other than the explanation that he gave, and it's a good one: that "no person with a developmental disability should be forced to linger on a waiting list when they have been assessed and necessary services have been determined. When need has been identified, the level of service to meet this need must be provided." My colleague Mr. Miller thought that that was a basic thing that no one could disagree with.

But the parliamentary assistant, Mr. Ramal, stated, "We will vote against this motion because we want to create some kind of transparency across the board and consistencies when we introduce one section in other sections of the bill. That's why we're not going to go for this one, not because we don't like you, just because it's not consistent with the stature of the bill."

I'm not sure what that means. And quite frankly, I was disappointed when I read what he had to say about the waiting lists: "It's not consistent with the stature of the bill." Not the "status" of the bill, the "stature" of the bill. It is strange that the government has no real rationale for

leaving the waiting list in, other than "it's not consistent with the stature of the bill."

So we tried again, and this was NDP motion 51 put forward by me. I simply moved that we strike out "may place the applicant on a waiting list for the services or funding, as the case may be" and substituting "may apply to the minister for additional funds." This did something else, and it was different from our other attempt. It was anticipated that if the government was intent upon putting waiting lists right in the legislation to tell the whole world that there are going to be waiting lists, there should be an alternative for the agencies and those who deal with the developmentally disabled; there should be an opportunity, as there is from children's aid, for those agencies to apply to the government for additional funding.

If there is an absolute need, if the waiting list continues to grow, if the services must be provided as they are provided by children's aid, then surely there must be a mechanism that would allow those agencies such as Community Living Ontario and all the others to come forward and say, "There isn't enough money. Can we have an additional amount of money from the contingency fund or any other fund that the government might have?" We proposed this. I thought it was pretty rational. If the government's going to go with a waiting list, then at least make it possible for the additional funds to come forward to reduce that waiting list, should it ever become ponderous, onerous or too longstanding. And of course the five government members voted that down, too.

So I have to say, "Okay, where do we go next?" So we tried something else, and this was NDP motion 50. This was that subsection 19(3) be struck out. The rationale for that was that we did not believe "that a person with a developmental disability should be forced to" wait "on a waiting list when they have been assessed and the necessary services determined." We went on to say that we were not naïve. And I am not naïve. We know that there are waiting lists for hip and knee replacements in the hospital. We know that there are waiting lists in a broad range of government services, including supportive housing. We know that there is a finite amount of money available. But having known that, we were upset that the government was trying to entrench it and that they even proposed that these waiting lists point to chronic underfunding, and we said that.

I went on—and I'm going quote myself, which I think is often a dangerous thing to do in the committee. I said, "I do not want to see this bill go forward with a waiting list. I think virtually every person who came before the committee over four days talked about abolishing the waiting lists. They talked about how this was something that they did not want to see in the law, and they have asked that it be removed." We attempted, therefore, to remove it.

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In the end, I guess the government's position was, "There's nothing for you here. There's nothing this year. There may be nothing next year; there may be nothing

for years ahead." That is what a waiting list does, and the government proceeded. All I can say is how profoundly disappointed all of us on that committee were—including, I believe, the government members—at having to put that into the bill.

There were other things in the bill that caused some great difficulties. One of them was the provision of workers. You see, what is happening here by virtue of this bill is potentially a very good thing: People will be given choice, whether to go to a service agency to get the service, as has been provided for many years; or families who wish an alternative may be able to use the resources of the government to directly fund and hire someone who is not part of a service agency. I know that many people have requested that. I see my friends from London up on the top; they have requested this for a long time.

I can understand why the government would want to accommodate this in what have, in the past, been rare circumstances; certainly it may be something that will go on if it works. But it requires the government to do something correct in order for it to happen, and the government refused to allow it to happen. They refused to do what was necessary to actually give credibility to what many think is a noble idea.

We know that people who work in this sector are chronically underfunded. We know that the wages that are paid, even for those service industries, can range from as little as \$10 to \$12 an hour to a high, we were told, in the \$15- to \$17-an-hour range. We know that the higher wages, in the \$15 to \$17 range, tend to be unionized places of work, by those belonging to CUPE or OPSEU or to one of the other service industries; we know they get paid a higher amount of money. We know that those places that are not organized tend to earn at the bottom. What we in the NDP are afraid of, and what I think everyone should be afraid of, is that when there is a direct, person-to-person contract—when there is no service agency and no union there to assist—the workers will be shoved to the bottom of the pay scale.

It is not unreasonable to imagine and to know that when one is dealing directly, one on one, and hiring through an agent, as this bill will allow, a family will be given an option: Do you hire somebody for minimum wage at \$8.75 an hour, and therefore you can afford 30 hours a week with the funds the government has given you, or do you hire somebody at twice that, at \$17 an hour, and they will belong to one of the unions and you will get them for 15 hours a week? I know what most families are unfortunately going to end up doing, and I don't blame them. They're going to hire somebody for \$8.75.

With greatest respect, those people may not have the same qualifications, but they are people and they need our protection too. So we tried to do two simple things, if the government is intent on proceeding this way, to ensure that those people who are brought into this industry, who are now part of the government scheme and who want to seek work in this sector, are protected too.

We attempted to make two motions. The first was NDP motion number 33:

"Deemed member of bargaining unit

"(10) A support worker hired by a person who receives funds under a direct funding agreement is deemed to be a member of a bargaining unit in the geographic area in which the person resides.

"Wages

"(11) A person who uses the funds provided under a direct funding agreement to hire a support worker shall pay the support worker,

"(a) an hourly wage equivalent to the hourly wage earned by employees of service agencies in the geographic area who have comparable responsibilities, job skills and experience; and

"(b) additional remuneration in lieu of benefits....

"(12) A person or entity from whom services are purchased with the funds provided under a direct funding agreement shall comply with such quality assurance measures as may be prescribed."

It's not surprising that the government voted this down, because the government has no intent of allowing people who come into the sector under this agreement who are not covered by a collective agreement of being paid the same wages as everyone else. They have no intent at all. Number two, they have no intent of giving them the necessary funds so that they can have hospitalization, so that they can have pay and other benefits consistent with what people who are already in this service industry get. I clearly understand where the service industry and many of the unions came in on this. This is clearly an attempt, they see—and I cannot see any rationale, because the government provided no rationale, for voting this down. I cannot see any rationale except that they want to reduce the wages of those who work in this sector, which is already chronically under-funded.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: It's not relevant.

Mr. Michael Prue: My friend here is saying it's not relevant to the bill. That's what he just told me—the parliamentary assistant. I think it is relevant to the bill. I think it is absolutely relevant that when we are setting up an alternative structure, the people who work in this alternative structure not be put in a position that they are second-class citizens, that they earn less, that they have no hospitalization and that they have no benefits. The government didn't want to go there.

I was extremely disappointed too because we had one deputant who talked about working in Alberta. He talked about working in Alberta with a service agency—Alberta has a similar system to what is being proposed here in Ontario. He worked first of all with a service agency. The service agency went bankrupt and didn't pay him, so he was transferred to another service agency. That too didn't work out, so the family came along and said, "We'll just do a one-on-one with you." The one-on-one worked all right for a few weeks or a few months, until he was injured as a result of the job. I believe he was pushed or fell down some stairs caring for a person with developmental disabilities. He was not angry about that; he knows that's part of the nature of the job, that from time to time it can be dangerous. But there he was, stuck, and

he had no insurance, no hospitalization; he was not covered by any laws. He came before the committee to tell us that we needed to make a provision for this.

So we tried. We tried again. This was a very simple thing that we said. I would just like to quote it for the record. We said—and this was motion 117:

"O. Reg. 175/98 (General) made under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997

"60.1 Schedule 1 to Ontario Regulation 175/98 (General) made under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 is amended by adding the following to 'Class H—Government and Related Services:

"5. Operation of a service agency under the Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008," as has been passed by committee."

That's a whole bunch of legal talk, but what that really meant was that people who come into this are deemed to be covered by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act so that these new employees that are hired by families are deemed to be covered.

Well, I have to tell you how extremely disappointed I was to the government reaction to that. You would think that people who work in an industry where they might be injured, from time to time—and it's because oftentimes, dealing with people with developmental disabilities, injuries do occur. I do know people who work in the industry, including my own brother, and injuries do occur. They occur. They are often not that serious, but they need to be dealt with.

The government first of all—the parliamentary assistant—tried to rule it out of order. I don't know what authority he had to rule it out of order because he was not the Chair. When the Chair corrected him that it was in order, he continued to try to rule it out of order until the legal counsel came and said that it was a perfectly legal motion to make, at which time, after I gave continued expression to wanting to protect these workers, the five Liberals present unanimously voted it down—because they don't want to provide any protection to these new workers. They don't want to do it, they don't want it in the bill, and they don't want it in the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. They simply do not want it.

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You can understand why people who work in this industry are upset. Here you have a government with flowery language that talks about the rights of the disabled—and I agree with everything that was said—but in implementing the bill, they are forgetting about the rights of the very workers who implement this act; they are forgetting about their rights. I have to tell you how profoundly disappointed I was with the government reaction on this.

We tried other things, too; we tried other things to make this bill a good bill. My colleague Mr. Miller moved a motion about consistency of service. He said: "A director shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that core mandated services prescribed by the regulations are

funded and provided at a consistent level across the province.”

You would think that would be something the government would want to do in a province that has a thing like the Liquor Control Board of Ontario, where you can go to any place in this province and find the prices identical to what they are in Toronto; in a province where you can go anywhere and find a hospital that will attempt to give you, if they have the services available, the same service you can get in Hamilton or in Ottawa; in a province where we try to be consistent and fair, where the rates for welfare and the rates for education and everything are spelled out so that everyone is treated fairly. That is not going to be in this bill. We attempted to have it, but it was voted down.

Mr. Miller gave an explanation. He said: “To uphold the commitment that individuals with developmental disabilities are included as active members of the community, it is unacceptable to leave people languishing on waiting lists. Therefore, services and supports identified under this act must be mandated services. If an individual is assessed, found to be eligible and necessary supports and services identified, then those supports and services should be provided without delay. This amendment ensures that proper steps are taken in order to do so.” Well of course the government is not interested in providing like services across the province. I think that’s because they are not interested in finding the necessary funds to do so.

We go on. There was a fifth thing we tried to do, and that was the whole concept of advocacy. We tried to set up an advocacy office so that there would be an advocate. There is an advocate if you live in assisted housing in Ontario. There are advocates in many fields that we are very proud of. There is a child advocate, there are advocates for everyone, but there is not to be an advocate for people with developmental disabilities. You can understand how profoundly disappointed people are. You can understand a group like ARCH, which came forward and said that this was something that was absolutely essential that we include in the bill—how disappointed they were when this government shot this idea down, too.

Mr. Miller, on my behalf, put forward a motion: “The minister shall establish an independent advocacy office to,

“(a) provide advocacy to persons with developmental disabilities in respect of services and funding under this act; and

“(b) provide education to persons with developmental disabilities about rights under this act.”

We thought that this was a great amendment. We thought that this was in compliance with the United Nations charter on the rights of the disabled. We thought that this was in compliance and was going to be something that every single group would want and that we would want for ourselves. But of course the government saw fit to shoot this down, too. I guess they don’t want to have an advocate, they don’t see a need for an advocate and they don’t believe that people with disabilities should have the same rights that you or I do.

We went on. We talked about the right of appeal: If you can’t have an advocate who speaks on your behalf, at least can we have a right of appeal, so that the families of people with disabilities or the disabled themselves can come forward and appeal an arbitrary decision made against them? We asked for that, and we thought that was a pretty reasonable thing: If we’re not going to have an advocate, can we have an appeal procedure? So in motion number 45, I proposed the following: That there be an appeal. “If an application centre determines on a review”—and this is what the motion was—“that an applicant is not eligible for services and funding under this act, the applicant, or a person acting on his or her behalf, may appeal the determination to a director in accordance with the regulations....

“The application centre shall provide the person appealing the determination with information about the appeal procedure.”

And a very important phrase here: “No person shall take a reprisal against an applicant who has appealed or a person who has appealed on the applicant’s behalf.”

The government saw fit to say no to this, too. Now, they did say, to be perfectly blunt, that you could go through the process, that you could go back to the officer or the person who had made the decision and try to rationalize or reason with them to change their mind. But there is no appeal process; they’re not willing to allow a more senior person or an independent body to look at it to see whether it’s reasonable.

I don’t understand. In almost every aspect of life in this country, whether it be employment insurance, access to welfare, Ontario Works or ODSP, literally anything, there is an appeal process so a person so aggrieved can go before a fairly independent person to talk about what went on and try to appeal it. That’s good enough for everyone else, but it doesn’t appear to be a right that this government wants to give to the developmentally disabled. I’m profoundly disappointed with this, too.

I don’t know where the government is going on this. I listened to the flowery language and listened to how we want to close down institutions. I listened to how “these people,” as the minister said—and I took umbrage with that statement too—“our people” need to be treated exactly the same, and they’re not going to be. So, again, here I am, disappointed.

There were other things. The whole issue of access without a warrant: I know this was more an issue brought by my colleagues in the Progressive Conservative Party, but it’s an important issue. Access without warrant, if you are developmentally disabled, is going to be the law, so that anyone who wants to come into your place of residence can come in without a warrant. No one can come into my house without a warrant, and I will ensure that they won’t come. I will ensure that they won’t, and I will live up to that. But a person who is developmentally delayed, or their family, will not have that safeguard. I know that the group called ARCH wrote a very long and very good paper about this being one of the fundamentals that needs to happen, that people who are trying to live

independently have to have the dignity and the sanctity of their own place. The government refused to act on this; the government refused to take this out of the legislation.

Now, I do understand that if there was a matter of profound safety, if someone's life was at risk, there may be cause for an emergency action from time to time, but that should be few and far between. My goodness, a warrant is not a hard thing to obtain. If there is reasonable cause to believe that a person is at risk, if there is a reasonable cause to believe that some illegal action is taking place and if there is a reasonable cause to believe that someone may be mistreated within the confines of their home, then surely a warrant will be issued. Warrants are issued every day, not just not just in criminal cases, but in all manners of cases, everything from finances to customs regulations to immigration to literally every government action. There is no reason to believe that a warrant could not be issued upon cause in this circumstance as well. But under this bill, developmentally disabled people will not have the same rights as you or I, and I think what went on is a shame, and I think it is a shame that the government would not bow to what were reasonable requests made by my colleagues in the Conservative Party and groups such as ARCH and others who brought this forward.

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There was the issue of legal capacity. Again, I go back to what Community Living has written, and this is on the final page of their four-page letter sent September 15, following the committee hearings, and I think they set it out very clearly and correctly. They wrote, "The bill fails, however, to make any provision for recognizing the legal capacity of people who have an intellectual disability or for providing support to those individuals who need assistance in exercising their legal capacity or making substantial decisions. Without such a clause, there remains a fundamental incoherency in the legislation."

In fact, that is correct. The absolute need for recognizing the legal capacity and a mechanism to fund assistance for people so that they can understand, is inherent for their being full citizens of our society. It was not contained within the body of the bill, and I can assure you that if it's not within the body of the bill there will never be such a position, nor monies for such a position. It makes rational sense to me.

I have a friend; his name is Martin Levine, and I'm going to talk about him in a minute. He describes himself as a slow learner. That's the adjective he uses for himself, but he understands and he knows. What he needs is just a little bit of time and a discussion to get his head around the issue, and some assistance. Then he knows exactly what he wants and exactly what he needs. I think that this should have been contained within the body of the bill, and there were attempts and discussions to bring this within the four walls, but it did not happen.

Just a little bit about Martin Levine, because I don't think I could talk about this issue without talking about him and the profound influence he has had upon me around all of these matters. Martin Levine is a person

who lives in the riding of Eglinton-Lawrence. Martin is well known to the member for Eglinton-Lawrence, Mr. Colle, but he's also well known to a great many politicians around this place, because Martin writes at least one letter a month to the Premier—at least one. He writes and tells the Premier what he thinks the Premier should be doing around a whole list of things, such as assisted housing, affordable housing, welfare rates, ODSP provisions and the like.

He's quite a remarkable man. I met him for the first time when he and a group came forward to give their life stories of what it was like to grow up, to have people call you "retarded," to have people not give you an opportunity, to be put in an institution when he was nine years of age. He sent me a few weeks ago—and I had never seen it before—a copy of a little book. It's photocopied, but it's a copy of a tiny book that was written by Martin Levine, as told to Gary Kogan, and it's the life story of Martin Levine. I don't want to read it all, although I could read it all in less than the six minutes remaining, but just a couple of quotes.

The first thing I knew is that he had epilepsy as a young man and that people didn't know how to deal with it, and his family didn't know how to deal with it. He went to school and he had a hard time learning. Today, we would have remedial classes and everything else, but in those days it didn't happen. So his family ended up putting him in an institution and he languished there for 19 years. He had never done anything wrong, but he spent 19 years of his life, until he was pretty well grown. A psychologist who was at the institution said he was too sick and would have to stay in the institution for the rest of his life.

Martin, in his story, writes:

"He did not listen to my side of the story. So I spent the next 20 years in institutions.

"I have been out of those institutions for 17 years now. My epilepsy is very much under control.

"Thanks to my workers Jill Yeatman and Valerie McKinnon, I moved out of the institution and in with my foster parents Bruce and Mary Phillips.

"They made a new life for me. It was not easy for them but they brought me out into the world and made me part of their family. I lived with them for 13 years.

"I was 35 years old when I got my first schooling. The institutions never had any schooling, so we could not learn reading, writing and math."

He went on to talk about how he was amazed that he could go to school and that the government paid for it. There were classes at the school and there were teachers who were patient and there were tutors who came and helped him in the literacy program at the North York library.

He goes on to talk about some of the pride that he has as a person in Ontario. He goes on to talk about the three jobs he's had and how happy he is and how he's worked there for seven years. He went on in his little book to talk about his contributions to society, even about having a bar mitzvah, as Martin is Jewish, but it didn't happen till

he was 42 years of age. You would know how difficult that is for a young Jewish man. Mostly that happens when you're around 13, and it happened to him when he was 42.

That said to him that he could now make his own decisions and, in fact, he does. He helps to raise money for Big Brothers, he works every day, he belongs to many community social groups. He works on political campaigns for people who he believes will help him. I believe he may have worked for Mr. Colle in the past; I know he came out and helped knock on a couple of doors for me.

We need to recognize that there are so many people like Martin Levine. We need to recognize that assistance is necessary. We need to recognize that funding has to be made available. There are no funds or provisions for funds within the body of this bill. We are waiting, I guess, with trepidation, with a little fear and perhaps even a little hope for that day, October 22, when the Minister of Finance stands up in his seat and tells us the state of the economy, whether there is going to be money to do the things that we know need to be done. We know from what the Premier had to say in the last couple of days, including yesterday at the Royal Ontario Museum, when asked about poverty, that there's going to be a great plan but there is not necessarily going to be any money to go with that great plan. So although they're going to identify what needs to be done in the long term, there may not be the resources to do it. That was reiterated yesterday by my colleague. The Honourable Minister of Children and Youth Services, the lead on poverty, said much the same thing in this House and later in scrums.

I am afraid of what is going to happen with this bill. I am afraid that the lofty goals and the fine words that were said by the minister and the parliamentary assistant yesterday will be for naught, that what is contained within the body of the bill, as weak as it is, will not have the resources to make it all happen. People like Martin Levine and the tens of thousands of others with developmental disabilities may not have what they need.

I believe this government has an obligation. If they are not going to be able to put the resources forward, then they should change the bill to make it even tougher and even stronger in order to allow hope. They should have made the changes that were requested of them for a preamble. They should have agreed to the requests that were made of them to take out waiting lists wherever they occurred within the bill so that people would have hope, that they would not languish for years and years waiting for service. They should have put provisions in the bill that allowed for workers to have workplace safety and health provisions provided and a decent wage. They should have agreed to core mandated services so that service could be provided anywhere and literally everywhere in this province. They should have allowed for an advocacy office so there would have been an advocate for the disabled. They should have allowed for a right of appeal in the absence of an advocate. They should have forbidden access to private homes without a warrant.

They should have given some funds and thought around legal capacity. They should have done all of those things that were necessary for the Martin Levines of this world to fully participate in this wonderful place we call Ontario.

I am saddened that they chose not to do that, that they went so timidly forward and that they are so full of such flowery words, but the actions, I think, belie all of that. I know the government has the necessary legislative muscle to pass this, and it will pass. I can only hope that something more is done in the future.

0950

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I was listening to the member from Beaches—East York since yesterday. He talked on many different issues. I was listening carefully to all the elements he described, which we discussed during the journey of the bill from Ottawa to Timmins to London and Toronto, and we listened to many different people.

I know this bill exactly. Everybody knows that the current Developmental Services Act is almost 35 years old, and it was part of its time, its face turned to the past, while Ontario looks forward to the future.

This bill is about choice, about people with disabilities, about their families. That's why we wanted to create choice. Also, when we listened to people from across the province, they mentioned and talked about many different issues. They talked about the title, the language of the bill, person-directed planning, applications, inspections, agencies taking over, waiting lists, complaints and regulations, and we dealt with all these issues. We dealt with them in many different fashions and many different ways. Maybe it's not exactly what the honourable member from Beaches—East York wants, but at least we discussed it, we talked about it and we made substantial changes.

He talked about salaries. We are not going to enter that debate, because salaries are not our jurisdiction. The aim from day one, as I mentioned, was to create choice for the family, for the person with the disability. That's what we're trying to do. Salaries are under the jurisdiction of the bargaining agreement with the Ministry of Labour.

He talked about advocacy. As we know, when we changed the application centre as part of this bill, we created two entities: one to process information and applications, and one to do the funding. As he mentioned, people can go back to the person and appeal and talk about it, and maybe they'll be able to change the decision.

He talked about inspections. No one said a private home should be inspected. But we talk about workplaces being subject to inspections—the minister spoke about it a lot yesterday—because we want to protect people with disabilities.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It was a pleasure to listen to the new leader of the NDP—perhaps I'm a little premature in that comment. We look forward to his comments. You

could hear the passion in his voice on this subject. It was obviously very important to him.

The issue that I thought I might comment on is where the government is allowing people to enter residences without warrants.

If you live in a long-term-care home, you need a warrant to come in. If you live in an apartment, a condo or government-subsidized housing, you need warrants to come into these places where people live.

In thinking about it—someone may have other examples—I believe the only place you can live and not have the protection of a warrant is when you're in jail. Guards in jails can enter cells without a warrant, and I think most of us would agree that's probably appropriate.

But this bill proposes that handicapped people living on their own in supportive housing are not subject to the same rights enjoyed by every other individual in our society, with the exception of people who are in jail: the protection of unauthorized entry. Handicapped people in our society would not enjoy that very, very basic right.

I think the government should take a very serious look at that. They should have an internal review of that. I think it's absolutely disgusting that in the 21st century we would look at the possibility of relegating someone to that status by legislation in this time and place.

Mr. Peter Kormos: We in the NDP are proud of the leadership of our colleague from Beaches–East York around this whole area of access. And that's what he has been talking about: access. Not a ramp up to the back door, not tokenism; he's been talking about the right of every Ontarian to participate fully in the social, cultural and economic life of this province. The member for Beaches–East York has been very clear about the fact that you either believe in that as a fundamental right or you don't. There are no half measures.

New Democrats are insistent that tokenism simply doesn't cut it. New Democrats are insistent that there isn't any more time to wait, just like the plea of Mr. Prue and other New Democrats around the issue of poverty in response to the government's announcement that they're going to defer their anti-poverty agenda because now is not the right time. Hell, when workers are losing their jobs left and right—a quarter of a million of them across the province—when poverty is booming, now couldn't be a better time.

I say this to you: Let's understand who's poor in this province. Workers who lose their jobs are poor; persons with disabilities are poor in this province. I say to you, to be poor just because you have a disability is in and of itself a fundamental violation of the most basic concepts of human dignity.

The New Democrats are going to keep working on this file—count on it. Michael Prue is going to keep providing leadership across the province—count on it. New Democrats are going to be there.

Mr. Bob Delaney: After three quarters of an hour of listening to the member for Beaches–East York, I think it's time to return to what Bill 77 was written to achieve. The current legislation is 35 years old. It dates back to

the era of Bill Davis and Pierre Trudeau. The world has changed, it's changed again and it's still changing. Even the scope and the range of the services and the supports for people with developmental difficulties has changed. This bill recognizes that men and women with developmental difficulties can live independently if they have the right supports.

The bill empowers people with more choices and more control over these supports. Bill 77 improves services. People only need to go to one place to apply for services and support. Bill 77 offers more choices: One size doesn't fit all. People could receive funding directly for supports that are tailored to their needs. Bill 77 levels the playing field. It makes the system more fair. Everyone will use the same application and the same assessment package.

Even the member in his just-completed remarks acknowledged these benefits, so let's go forward together. Let's update the language and the terms in the bill and bring them into the 21st century. Let's get the province moving to create application and funding entities for developmental services. Let's authorize them to make decisions to allocate resources and to deliver services. Let's stop sending people around town to multiple agencies and focus on the solution rather than the process.

Ontario spends more than \$1.5 billion every year on a system that serves 40,000 people. Let's help the agencies that deliver these services focus more on the people whom they serve and less on bureaucratic processes and paperwork.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member from Beaches–East York has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Michael Prue: I'd like to thank my colleagues the members from London–Fanshawe, Halton, Welland and Mississauga–Streetsville.

A couple of points in the very brief two minutes: I'd like to thank the member from Halton for what he had to say about warrantless entry again. I had never thought of it quite in that context, that the only people other than disabled who do not have the right not to have their places of abode searched are those in jail, but I guess that is in fact correct. I think that one statement said legions in this debate.

I'd like to thank my colleague from Welland because he brought up an issue which I had not really had time to explore in the hour available to me, and that's the whole issue of the disabled and poverty. We know that not all disabled live in poverty, but we know that too many do, especially those with developmental disabilities. They tend, in almost every case, to live in poverty.

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I'm reminded of a wonderful group that Carolyn Lemon runs called Lemon and Allspice. It's developmentally disabled or delayed people who work in a kitchen. Sadly, what happens to them is that they get ODSP, but much of what they earn is clawed back. I've said before to this government, and I'll say it again today, that having a disability should not be tantamount to for-

ever, for your entire life, living in poverty. The government needs to recognize that people, whatever their disabilities, whatever their skills or abilities, provide a service to all of Ontario and they should be allowed to keep those monies they earn and to escape poverty.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to join in the debate this morning. I want to talk for a minute about where we were 35 years ago when this developmental services sector was last refreshed and revised and where we are today.

La Loi de 2008 sur les services et soutiens favorisant l'inclusion sociale des personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle est une nouvelle loi qui va aider les personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle à être plus autonomes et plus libres dans leurs choix.

C'est certain qu'il y a 35 ans, quand la loi a été premièrement mise en place, la société était très différente. Il y a 35 ans, j'avais cinq ans. Quand j'avais cinq ans, le monde était très différent. Quand j'étais jeune enfant, ma grand-mère travaillait dans une des institutions où les gens étaient mis quand ils avaient une déficience intellectuelle. Depuis ces 35 ans, on a bien changé le domaine et la façon dont on donne le soin—un soin compassionné, un soin de communauté—à ceux qui vivent dans nos communautés.

Alors, cette loi va aider l'Ontario à continuer à bâtir un système de services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle qui est plus moderne, plus équitable et plus durable. C'est un système qui va être accessible aujourd'hui et qui va nous aider à nous rendre à demain. C'est un système qui va donner à ces gens une plus grande autonomie et une plus grande liberté d'action.

La loi qu'on met en place, la loi dont on discute ici dans la législature aujourd'hui, va avoir un langage plus moderne et plus nouveau. Cela va mettre en place un système de demande et d'évaluation. On va continuer à regarder comment on peut gérer un système qui va aider les gens à continuer à vivre dans nos communautés et dans chaque région, où ils vont avoir les mêmes outils. On va avoir des normes standardisées.

Il y a aussi une compréhension qu'on doit avoir une planification axée sur les personnes, une planification où les personnes elles-mêmes vont pouvoir faire des décisions avec leur famille, et puis on va centrer sur eux.

Alors, c'est une approche différente de celle qu'on a eue dans le passé, quand on mettait tout le monde dans une grande institution. Même si on leur donnait des soins avec beaucoup de compassion et de conviction, c'était un système où on ne les traitait pas comme individus. Alors, pendant 35 ans, les gens ont beaucoup demandé d'avoir pouvoir avoir un traitement individuel, un financement direct. Cela donnerait aux personnes et à leur famille plus de choix et plus de souplesse.

D'après tout ce qu'on a appris dans 35 ans dans le domaine, une nouvelle définition de la déficience intellectuelle est bien importante pour qu'on comprenne qu'il y a beaucoup de différents types de personnes qui ont des

situations individuelles et des déficiences différentes. Ils ont aussi des spécialités, des choses qu'on devrait requérir pour avoir un système équitable.

On doit aussi assurer que ce nouveau système répond aux demandes des familles. Dans ce domaine, il est très important de savoir qu'on a eu plusieurs présentations quand on était en comité. On a reçu beaucoup de demandes des familles et on a répondu à beaucoup de leurs demandes.

Bill 77 had a high degree of consistency when we heard presentations from various communities across the province. Based on that feedback, a number of motions to amend Bill 77 were brought forward. I want to speak just specifically to a couple of those motions so that when folks are listening at home or around the province, they understand the process that has been taking place.

One of the recommendations brought forward by many of the families and many of those who made presentations was that we needed to change the name of the act because they wanted the act to be reflective of the inclusion of persons. That amendment was made, to change the short title of the act to Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008. That came directly from those who are most in the know and most closely connected to the work being done in communities to help those who need the help of the province with respect to those developmental services.

The other choice of language that was brought forward at committee was to put forward the language of supports, and that the bill should include services and supports. Those amendments were approved at committee to make sure that was reflected in this new modern act that, as I said in the beginning of my submissions, is to take us from today, where we're refreshing after 35 years of not refreshing, to be ready to reflect the future that we will need going forward.

Another important concept—and I talked about the autonomy and the individual approach that needs to be brought forward—is the concept of person-directed planning. That amendment was also approved to include person-directed planning as a ministry-funded service and support under the act. That's so critical for the families that I meet in my community in Etobicoke–Lakeshore, who come forward and who want us to move very much from the past that I talked about earlier, where you're institutionalized, maybe very well cared for, but not treated as an individual. We have moved over 35 years to today to a time where we recognize that even those with developmental disabilities need to have that individual treatment and need to be respected, and our legislation needs to reflect the fact that individuals and their families have decisions to make, and may make different decisions depending on their circumstances.

Recommendations also came forward with respect to the application process. Bill 77 was amended to set in place and outline a consistent process for applying to access developmental services, supports and funding.

One of the discussions on the floor of the Legislature over the last couple of days has been concerns with

respect to inspections. I do want to highlight that concerns with respect to inspections were brought forward to the committee and an amendment was approved by the committee to outline, in regulation, the conditions that must be met in order to enter and inspect a supported group living or intensive supported group living residence without a warrant. I know the minister spoke about this issue yesterday and highlighted the importance of being able to get in quickly in instances that are necessary to protect the safety and the well-being of those we have the responsibility to care for, but at the same time, the committee reflected and understood that you need to have protections in place to make sure that only under certain conditions are inspections undertaken without a warrant. That is committed to in the legislation to be put forward by regulation.

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Another area that we've talked about over the last couple of days is with respect to waiting lists. I want to highlight the amendment that was approved by the committee with respect to waiting lists. The provisions put in place allow the establishment that a waiting list would remain in the act. For those of us who work in our communities and understand the importance of transparency, and families understanding how individuals are prioritized and how waiting lists are managed, the establishment of a waiting list is to promote transparency in the process of prioritizing individuals and managing waiting lists. Funding entities will provide the ministry with annual reports on waiting lists, which the ministry would post on its website or in any other appropriate manner. That's critical for those who think that some work is done in backrooms and that there's not a transparency and an understanding with respect to how we are ensuring that individuals and their families get the services that they are looking for.

I think that those areas are ones that will help, again, lay the foundation in a piece of legislation that we need to govern and help model in this sector for many years ahead. The world was a very different place 35 years ago, and, as I said earlier, I was five years old. I don't even want to think how old I'm going to be 35 years from now. I'm going to be too old and too grey, but I certainly know the world will be a very different place again. We are trying, with the revision of this important piece of legislation, to speak to the needs, to reflect the needs of communities, of individuals, of their families, of a sector that does incredibly important work in all of our communities across the province. I know some of my most privileged discussions have been with families I work with in my community to make sure that their sons and daughters are well taken care of by those in this sector who do important and wonderful work on behalf of all of us.

So we're trying to set in place a structure and a piece of legislation that will help make sure that this sector is in a good state for many years to come, that reflects the modernization of where we are at. I'm very proud that we have been the government who has taken the steps

necessary to make sure that 35 years of inaction is now replaced by an important and modernized piece of legislation.

With that, I cede the floor to someone else who might like to debate this important bill, and I certainly look forward to standing in my place and supporting it when the vote is held.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and/or comments?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'd like to respond to comments by my friend from Etobicoke-Lakeshore with reference to this bill. I'm concerned about the passage of this bill in its present form simply because I've had a belief, probably all of my life, that handicapped people are people, just like anybody else. The difference between a handicapped person and myself is that I'm not handicapped and they are. We have to treat them with the utmost respect. I've held round tables in my own community on this subject, and I've had occasion, like many members in this House, to meet with those on the receiving end of what this government has in place. We can agree on one thing: We certainly need to revisit, review and change legislation that indeed is too old and too tired to address the realities of today.

But we come to committee as a party to try to make contributions with open minds and to work in the true bipartisan spirit that should mark this House. When I hear my honourable friend speak, I know that she's sincere, but back in committee, I also know that we got slapped down: 66 amendments, all of them reasonable, none of them—not one of them—accepted.

This bill remains flawed. We are simply introducing another level of bureaucracy and built-in wait lists by passing legislation in its present form. There is an unworkable appeal process built into this. Can you imagine facing your accuser to appeal a decision? The same body that says, "This is the way that you're going to be treated" is the body that you appeal to when you don't like the treatment that's being meted out. This, in effect, as it stands, is a form of abrogation of personal rights because it includes warrantless entry. We can do better.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I, for one, down where I come from in Welland riding, have been blessed and fortunate to have had the assistance and guidance of people who are in the Community Living movement, perhaps itself close to 35 years old. Are my colleagues opposite going to suggest that they be replaced? I think not. I'm talking about people like Barb Vyrosto, down with the Community Living centred at Welland, and the work that these people have done for the maturation of this movement. It's an access movement.

I just find it incomprehensible after listening to the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore—and look, I understand. She's in the government benches. She's got to shake the pompoms and lead the cheer for the government. She's paid to do it. If she doesn't, she'll find herself sharing a caucus room with Billy Murdoch. But for the life of me, I don't understand why the government was not more responsive to any number of proposals put

forward by Community Living Ontario. I think one of the most substantive ones was the request for a preamble that would provide guidance to what is, in and of itself, some pretty stark, bare-bones legislation. You've heard Mr. Prue talk about the significance of a preamble. You heard the submissions at committee. Why would the government not have adopted that very wise—and I say “wise” because it is a wise proposal, because it provides guidance for those who have to interpret the legislation and avoids the anomalies that are inevitably going to flow.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I also want to add my voice to the discussion on Bill 77. The member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore talked about how things have changed, the fact that we haven't revised this legislation in over 35 years. We are now moving forward with this.

It brought to mind, even for myself, how things have changed in my lifetime. As young people, we used the word “retarded” in reference to people with developmental challenges. That no longer is the case. At one time, we weren't exposed. People hid these children. They were ashamed. They didn't know how to handle them. They were told that they should institutionalize, and they did. Parents didn't have options. They didn't know what to do. Now we have parents who want to take care of their children and keep them at home. There's a group called the Lifelong Caregivers' Support Group of Sarnia-Lambton, who have arrived, I see. My sister is a member; my niece has developmental challenges and the family embraces them. There are opportunities there for her now that she wouldn't have had 35 years ago.

Are we perfect in how we're dealing with developmental challenges today? No. We still have a long ways to go. But I think Bill 77 opens the door for that kind of change. We are going to move forward in a way that we haven't done before. We're giving families options that will allow families to make decisions for themselves that weren't there before. I think that's very important. I'm very proud to be able to say that as a government, we are addressing something that other governments—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further questions and comments?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Whoever gets up.

Mr. Michael Prue: Is he standing up or not?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I don't know.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): There are two minutes. Two minutes: the honourable member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much for an unexpected opportunity to respond. I listened to the honourable member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore and what she had to say, but I have to agree with my colleague from London that this was just more of a cheering section, a member who is speaking on behalf of the government and what they're doing because that is what is expected. I did not hear the passion in her voice that one would

expect if one believes that this legislation is so good. I did not hear the reasoned and rational argument about why certain things were put in the bill and others were neglected.

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Quite frankly, I remain disappointed. I hope that other government members, when they speak to this bill, will explain in some detail why the government chose half-hearted measures; why the government did not listen to groups like Community Living and put in a preamble; why the government did not listen to the 34 people who talked about not enshrining waiting lists in the legislation; and why the government did not listen to those who were advocating, like ARCH, on behalf of persons with disabilities and looking for funds and offices for advocacy and for appeal. I haven't heard any of that.

All I hear are the same flowery words, that 35 years have gone by and we're updating a piece of legislation and that people with developmental disabilities are part of our community. We all accept that the legislation is old. We all accept that people with developmental disabilities are part of our community. But, you know, the actions need to be taken to strengthen this legislation. If a government is content to go forward with half-hearted legislation, then stand up and say, “That's all we want to do. We're going to take this half-hearted approach.” Be honest with it. Be honest with the community and then, perhaps, we can proceed from there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore has up to two minutes to respond.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I always do find it passing strange to listen to the opposition who, in the recent history of this province, had the opportunity to move forward legislation, to make the decisions in this Legislature, and they chose not to. They did not make it a priority to reinvest in this sector and they did not make it a priority to change this legislation.

The commitment of our government is loud. We have moved forward to modernize a piece of legislation more than 35 years in the waiting. In addition to that, my constituents in my community of Etobicoke–Lakeshore know the importance that we've placed on this sector because we have committed to investing a half a billion dollars in developmental services since coming to office. A half a billion dollars is a significant amount of money. We've made it a priority.

Each of us sitting in this Legislature—I know from working with my colleagues from all over the province—sit down and work closely with our parents and with our Community Living foundations. I work very closely with Community Living Toronto. I work hand in hand with parents in my community who are looking for the best for their children. Where those children are now adults and their parents are aging, we're working to find creative solutions to make sure that those children who are now adults, and many who are young, will be able to have what is best.

As every single parent knows, and I know, you would do whatever it takes and you will move every mountain

to help your kids. They have a government who understands that. They have a government who's willing to work in partnership with them, willing to modernize a piece of legislation that, frankly, nobody cared about for 35 years. Those on the other side of the House who are sitting here now saying they would have done it very differently, well, you know what? Those are hollow, hollow words, because they did not.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I've been listening to the debate and this is an important subject for myself. I think, very clearly, we can all see in this House and throughout this province that one of the fundamental and important roles of government is to provide for and protect those who are not capable of doing so for themselves.

As I listened to the debate and the discussion, I heard that the purpose of bringing in this legislation is because we have old legislation, that it has to be revised, that it's the age of the legislation that requires new legislation, not the betterment of the protection of our handicapped people, people with disabilities. That's not why this bill is being changed, apparently; it's because the old one is 35 years of age.

The members of the third party make a significant point. The preamble that was requested is absolutely fundamental in a piece of legislation such as this, to provide that guidance for the people who will be interpreting this legislation down the road. The government has failed miserably in not providing that guidance in this legislation, for down the road what will be the intent of this legislation other than it replaced something that was 35 years old?

There are good elements to this legislation, but it is a half-hearted attempt at addressing problems. I would like to just focus on what I see as flaws, but not just myself; many community groups have indicated, through committee, that there are indeed flaws that are going to hamper their ability to provide good services to those most in need. The first one is that, clearly, the government does not expect to fund completely people with disabilities, and that is why wait times will be entrenched in this legislation. Just for clarification, we have wait times now in that 35-year-old legislation. It's not defined in the legislation, but we do have wait times.

I'll just give you a couple of examples from one of my community forums in Lanark county earlier this year: 234 people are on a wait list for residential services; 273 people are on a wait list for program services. And of those 273, 134 are children; another 142 people are on wait lists for day program support services.

We have wait times. Now, instead of just being unacceptable and intolerable that we have wait times, they will be legislated as acceptable. I find this totally unacceptable, that the government intends not to fund, not to provide and not to protect those most in need, and is willing to entrench its mediocrity in legislation.

The bill also creates more bureaucracy for individuals and families to deal with, if they don't have enough

already. We've seen so many examples of parents and caregivers of people with disabilities travelling through the maze of bureaucracy. It's hurtful for me to see it when I hear their stories of going through all the empty doors, the false doors of bureaucracy, trying to find services for their loved ones, only to find more dead ends.

I'll just give some examples. One was the Passport program, which sounds great—much like the flowery words and rhetoric that we've heard from the other side. In my area last year, there were 229 applicants for the Passport program. Five applicants were approved. That's right, five of 229—2%. That's what happens when government creates programs, elevates expectations and then sits on its hands with funding. I find those numbers disturbing—I think everybody in this House would find those numbers disturbing—but now they will be entrenched. Again, mediocrity is the order of the Liberal day.

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I'll give you an example. Out of those Passport applications, 20 carried the same priority score of 41. Karen York, whose son has disabilities, received one of those priority scores, and she got the same word back: "Unfortunately, your application cannot be funded at this time. However, Passport will keep your application on file for the next three years." We are spending significant dollars administering a program that does not fund anything other than the administration of the program.

This Liberal government can do better. It is not the 35-year-old piece of legislation that is at fault; it is the lack of political will, the lack of political oversight that is at fault, not the legislation.

Many speakers have spoken about this warrantless entry and, clearly, we must judge governments not by their intentions, but by their actions. Again, a government's role is to provide protection and not to abrogate the rights of its citizens, least of all its most vulnerable citizens. This idea that because someone is disabled they no longer have the protection of privacy that we all enjoy—our homes are our castles. This is not for disabled people. Disabled people have no privacy under this legislation.

I find it difficult to believe that anybody in this House, any legislator, would even bring such an abhorrent thought into legislation—that we can just enter somebody's residence and remove their privacy because they are disabled. But, like many of the other amendments—there were over 200 amendments to this bill. A few did get put through, the ones that were sponsored by the Liberal Party, not the ones by all the community groups, members of the third party or members of the Progressive Conservative Party. Still, there was a half-hearted attempt to address the failings of their execution and implementation of support and services and protection for people with disabilities.

In the same vein as this warrantless entry—that is a fundamental tenet of justice: that we have our right to privacy, our freedom of privacy. Another tenet of justice

is a review process, an appeal process. We often hear the terms from this Liberal government of "openness" and "transparency," and that everything is good as long as they use those words in front of their phrase, as long as it's "open and transparent."

The appeal process for this assessment: If somebody with disabilities is assessed by an individual or group, the only appeal process is back to the assessor. It is absolutely, fundamentally and totally incomprehensible that the Liberal government would include that in this half-baked legislation. It would be like getting a ticket for going through a yellow light, and then having the police officer who gave you the ticket being the judge and the jury. If the Liberal government indeed believes that openness and transparency is important, they will modify this and install and include an appeal process that is not just flowery, but effective; not one that is just open and transparent, but one that is real, one that is tangible, one that has effect and value for those engaged in being assessed. The PC Party believed, and brought forth an amendment, to have the Ombudsman as a vehicle and a means to deal with appeals. That amendment was struck down as well.

I've seen so often in this last year, as I've spent time with members of the disabled community in my riding, that there are indeed hardships, there are troubles, there are difficulties—without a doubt, too many of them for us to bear or tolerate, in my opinion. But I see in this bill—as we have seen in other bills and other legislation—that the minister is removing herself from oversight and responsibility in this legislation. She's taken a hands-off approach, creating arm's-length arrangements where really any minister of this portfolio will be able to sit back and say, "I'm only responsible for funding; you have to deal with others." That's been a great thing, and I think of how over the last number of years politicians and government are willing to abdicate our ownership, our responsibility to the citizens of this province. It is not enough to hand off responsibility to an arm's-length organization and then plead ignorance or plead inability. They can do that already, quite effectively.

We need to take to heart our responsibilities. We have to ensure that when there's a problem, people can access government, access ministers, and demand accountability and oversight. It's not enough that we just pass off all the regulations that this bill will create to the bureaucracy and not have any political oversight over those regulations. We are unsure of what those regulations will be, but we know we will not see them. They will have the force of law and nobody on this side of the House will have an opportunity to debate them or challenge them. Nobody in our galleries will have the opportunity to review them, discuss them or debate them—they'll just be done.

I really request the Liberal government to take time to rethink and reflect on this piece of legislation. Look at the flaws that you are creating with this legislation and address them, fix them. There are many people out there who are counting on your government to fix the problems, not entrench them.

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I have to address one other failing in this, and we already see it right now. In my community, there is a pressures and priorities group that defines the needs and services requirements, and it creates budgets for them. We spend countless hours developing that pressures and priorities budget, and then the ministry provides funding, not on that budget but on a per capita basis. These are elements that will continue to be flaws under the new legislation. This new legislation does not address that at all. In fact, it is my belief that it expects not to fund these pressures and priorities, and once again, to ensure that wait times are the order, not improved times, not beneficial times.

For all the members here, all the members in my community of Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, it's time for the Liberal government to stand up, to think about this and to fix and correct the flaws, and ensure that the people of this province who are the most needy and who are the most vulnerable are not forgotten by this legislation and by your government.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It being just about time for introduction of visitors, I think we'll move to introduction of visitors. We'll just wait for the Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning, members. I'd like to introduce a few guests today.

On behalf of the member for Welland, Jozef Kormos from Haniska-Prešov, Slovakia, in the west members' gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

On behalf of the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, we'd like to welcome the Lifelong Caregivers Support Group of Sarnia-Lambton. Welcome to Queen's Park today as well.

I'd ask all members to welcome former member Gary Malkowski, from the riding of York East, from the 35th Parliament, in the east gallery. Welcome today, Gary.

ORAL QUESTIONS

C. DIFFICILE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Minister of Health. I'd like to warmly welcome the Minister of Health to his new position.

Minister, earlier this week you supported the Prime Minister's call for a public inquiry into listeriosis, which killed 19 people across Canada. When 44 people died of SARS, you repeatedly demanded an inquiry and we responded. There are now at least 500 deaths from C. difficile across Ontario that we know of. The actual number is unknown and it could well be in the thousands.

Minister, I ask you, how many more excruciating, painful and undignified deaths in our hospitals will it take before you call an investigation to get some answers?

Hon. David Caplan: I do want to first of all accept the good wishes of my colleague opposite. I do want to extend my sympathy to all of the patients and families who have been affected by hospital-acquired infections. I want all members to understand and know that I take patient safety incredibly seriously.

Hospitals are actively working to continue to manage outbreaks when they occur and where they occur. We've done the studies. There have been three independent inquiries, reviews and investigations into C. difficile in Ontario hospitals. That's why, and following the advice of medical experts, we will have mandatory reporting at the end of this month. When you track, as we found in other jurisdictions around the world, you can improve upon it. The best prevention does remain handwashing, and in Ontario some of the best protocols anywhere in the world—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: You haven't learned from any reports because the reports do not exist. Despite the fact that you say you've learned from the Soo, you've learned from Joseph Brant, you haven't.

Pursuant to a freedom of information request that I have here, we've learned that the coroner who investigated the 22 deaths in the Soo never produced a report. Yesterday, your Premier said it was a coroner's jury that looked into C. difficile in the Soo. That's incorrect. There was never a jury. There was never a report.

We've also learned that your ministry doesn't have a report of the outbreak at Joseph Brant. In fact, your ministry has, according to the response, no notes, no memos, no records whatsoever into either report. There's no paper trail.

Are you prepared today to retract those false statements that you, your Premier and your predecessor have made? You have not learned everything that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister?

Hon. David Caplan: In fact, the acting medical officer of health and the associate deputy chief coroner of Ontario have said that the investigations that have taken place are sufficient and it would not add anything new to have anything in addition. That's why we've brought in Dr. Michael Baker, one of the noted and well known patient safety advocates and experts, to form a medical expert committee to be the lead on patient safety.

The provincial infectious disease advisory committee, or PIDAC as it is known, is providing that expert advice to the government. That's why we are beginning, as I had mentioned earlier, the tracking, the mandatory reporting, which will be in place at the end of this month. But in addition to that, we have 137 new infection control positions in hospitals around Ontario. We have 14 regional

infection control networks to promote best practices. We have—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.
1050

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: This minister, like his predecessor and the Premier, continues to stonewall and not provide the public with the answers they deserve and have the right to know. Not only are you stonewalling us, but you're stonewalling the families of the people whose family died. Dr. Warren Hewitt's father-in-law died at Joe Brant. He tried to get a copy of Dr. Gardam's report into Joe Brant and he was told by your ministry that you don't have it. This is his FOI request. And then, you wonder why the public's lost confidence. He says, "My question is, insofar as the ministry and the minister did not possess a copy of the report outlining the extent of the outbreak at Joseph Brant, how could the minister possibly be in a position to fully consider the merits of an inquiry?" I agree.

You failed to tell Ontarians the truth. You don't have any reports. You're hiding from accountability and liability. You have a choice today, Minister. Be different from your predecessor and your Premier. You can show leadership. Will you—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister?

Hon. David Caplan: I disagree. The premise of the member's question is simply wrong. This government—my predecessor, the Premier and all members—has taken the leadership to put in place the necessary resources and supports to ensure patient safety. That's why we're beginning, and we will be the second jurisdiction in Canada, to have public reporting on C. difficile and we'll be expanding to include other hospital-borne infections. That's why we put in place, as I mentioned earlier, 137 new infection control positions in hospitals. That's why we've created 14 regional infection control networks. That's why we're working not only with the expert committee that we've brought together, but we've brought together the Ontario Hospital Association and their constituent partners in individual visits and teleconferencing in order to share those best practices that have been recognized to be amongst the best in the world as far as the kind of handwashing protocols that ought to be in place.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Last night, we witnessed the President of the United States on television indicating that America's economy is at risk and that they could be facing a long and painful recession. As you well know, living in a border community, Ontario's economy is very closely linked to the economic well-being of the United States and the President's message has to be of concern.

Minister, can you advise the House what plans your government has in place to, as much as possible, protect

this province's jobs and savings if there is further deterioration in the US situation?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We've laid out a five-point plan that is solid, that is working. It involves targeted business tax cuts. It involves substantial investments in skills training and substantial investments in infrastructure, which will provide short-term employment and long-term productivity improvement. It provides for investments and innovation to help prepare for the economy of the 21st century and it involves building partnerships: partnerships with our municipalities, partnerships with our First Nations, partnerships with the federal government.

There is no doubt that the state of the US economy is of deep concern to all of us here in Ontario and indeed around the world. We will continue to implement the plan we've laid out. We believe it is the right plan and we believe it is showing results.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The minister's response should fall under the heading of alarming. We know the economic outlook facing the government has weakened noticeably since the spring and now it looks like it could get much, much worse. This government clearly has no contingency plans in place. Its answer is always the same: Point fingers at the federal government and repeat the mantra, "Five-point plan, five-point plan," and then apparently hide their heads under the blankets and hope it all goes away.

Minister, will you please try to give people worried about their jobs, their kids' futures and their pension some comfort that you are prepared to deal with a potential crisis in the US economy? Please.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I would remind the member this is not a potential crisis in the US economy; it has been there for 18 months. What hasn't been in this debate is your party.

The people of this province are looking to all levels of government to respond appropriately. We have laid out a plan which does just that. We have laid out a plan that makes targeted critical investments in the areas that we have been advised, by the business community, labour and others, are the appropriate places to make investments. We do so in the context of a balanced budget. We do so in the context of an economy whose growth—while there continues to be very modest growth, there continues to be growth. I will lay out on October 22 precisely where our numbers are, and I would remind the member that we built in reserve and contingency at all levels of the budget—

Interjection: Prudence.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: —prudence—to ensure that Ontario is prepared to face the challenges that we have acknowledged for more than 18—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The reality is that they are ignoring experts and seem oblivious to the storm clouds circling this province. Almost 85% of our exports go to the United States. Almost one million Ontario jobs

are dependent on those markets. Before the recent crisis in the financial markets, TD Bank Financial Group predicted Ontario's unemployment rate going up above 7% and personal income stalling. Inflation is up; we know this. Housing starts, manufacturing sales and international merchandise exports are down. The signals are there; the alarm bells are ringing.

Minister, when are you going to admit that your five-point plan is failing the people of this great province and bring in policies, recommended by a range of experts, that can protect the economic well-being of this great province?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What we reject are the policies of tax cuts, which were present in the United States, and deregulation, which was present in the United States, the same panacea that you and your friends propose to offer. The time now is for prudence. The time is to hunker down. We have laid out a plan that does just that. I remind the member opposite that the very economists he has quoted have also said that our plan makes investments in the right places, our plan is prudent. Our plan, in the view of many people, including the 21 business leaders I met with yesterday morning, is the right plan. It involves careful and cautious response to the circumstances not only Ontario and Canada find themselves in, but indeed all western economies. This government is moving in—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. New question.

POVERTY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. This government's long-term poverty plan is getting more long term by the day. First, the Premier says he has to go slow on poverty because of the economy. Now this minister says that the government strategy is not even "about what's in the budget next March." During these difficult economic times, how does this minister justify telling Ontarians that there will be no new expenditures for poverty in the upcoming budget and that they should just continue to wait for a plan that may never come?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me make it really clear that what has been said by the Premier and by myself is that we are on track to deliver a poverty reduction strategy, a long-term, comprehensive poverty reduction strategy for this province by the end of the year. The implementation of the strategy, as we have always said, will be in a manner that is as aggressive as we can do. Despite the attempt of members opposite to pull out certain questions from our consultation document and ignore the others, we are moving aggressively forward on this. I am as committed to this as I have ever been, as are members of my caucus and as is the Premier.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: As economic downturn pushes more Ontarians into poverty, the government is backtracking on its poverty promises. The backtracking is also very disrespectful to the thousands of Ontarians who took

time to participate in their poverty consultations. Yesterday, the minister said the consultations were extraordinary. She's right. They are extraordinary, because the government won't even reveal what was said. That's extraordinary.

When will this government release a report, not just on its poverty plan, but a report dealing with the consultation and what those participants said during that process? We need to know what the consultation gave you in terms of information from the people who are actually living in poverty in this province. Why won't you reveal what's in those reports?

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Hon. Deborah Matthews: As the member opposite well knows, we have released all of the submissions that were made from organizations through the website. You have those reports, and you know what was said. I was happy to finally get a copy of your report yesterday, which was a list of things you heard—very similar to the things we heard. I wouldn't describe it as a strategy, but that's another point. We are not wasting any time. We are not waiting. We are delivering on issues immediately. This past July, the first Ontario benefit cheques started to be delivered to low-income families across the province. The minimum wage has gone from \$6.85, when we were elected, to \$8.75—it's on its way to \$10.25. We have introduced a low-income dental plan in our last budget, we have doubled the funding for student—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The reality is that this minister still will not reveal what was said in her consultations that she held across the province. She will not say what the government will do; she will not even say when the government will do it. In fact, she won't even state clearly who the plan is going to help. Sometimes the government says the plan will be comprehensive, and sometimes it's only going to apply to children. Could the minister at least clarify one thing for Ontarians: Will her government's plan really be comprehensive and apply to all people living in poverty in Ontario? Or will it only apply to children?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The answer to your question is this: We will be delivering a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy for the province of Ontario. It will lay out a road map that, if implemented, over time, will reduce poverty in this province. We have every intention of implementing the strategy. It will speak to all people living in poverty in this province.

But our highest priority is breaking the cycle of poverty. Our focus to begin will be with children. We know that the most important thing we can do for kids living in poverty is to ensure they get the education they need to be successful in their lives. The evidence is very clear that investments made in young children pay off multiple-fold. We intend to listen to the research, and we will implement the strategy.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: We don't need a long, long road map; we need the rubber to hit the road by this government.

MANUFACTURING AND FORESTRY SECTOR JOBS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This next question is to the Minister of Finance. It appears that this government's sole response to Ontario's job crisis is to plead to all who will listen that Ontario needs to be treated the same as all other have-not provinces. What he refuses to admit is that it's his government's inaction over the past five years that has directly been responsible for Ontario's ongoing slide into have-not status. When will the minister admit that 235,000 lost manufacturing jobs, 40,000 lost forestry jobs and the growing list of devastated communities across Ontario is his responsibility? When will he stop passing the buck?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Well, in fact, the government has a five-point plan. We have invested over a billion dollars in skills training, which you voted against. We have invested in the last year \$9.9 billion in infrastructure, which the NDP voted against. We have invested \$3 billion in corporate tax cuts and tax cuts designed to protect the jobs of Hamilton workers, and you voted against it.

We are calling on the federal government for a partnership, and I'd like to know: Will Jack Layton stand up for Ontario? Will he ensure that if Ontario qualifies for equalization, Ontario will be treated fairly? Will Jack Layton ensure that Ontarians get equal per capita health care funding? What about it? What's Jack Layton's view on that issue? I ask the member opposite.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's even more clear from the minister's answer that he and the Premier intend to spend the rest of the federal election blaming everybody but themselves for Ontario's slide into the economic minor leagues. It's also clear from the minister's answer that he refuses to take responsibility for the failure of his own economic program, the five-point failure, such as doling out more than \$400 million to some of the world's largest auto companies without securing job guarantees.

When will the minister admit that his so-called "fairness for Ontario" campaign is nothing more than a cheap diversion from the real issue at hand: his government's complete and utter failure to sustain Ontario's manufacturing and resource jobs?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Premier of Ontario is today at a Honda plant welcoming 300 new jobs to Ontario with money that we provided, which that member and her party voted against—the NDP, the "never done pandering" party.

This government has made strategic investments in the automotive sector and the high-tech sector to attract and maintain the jobs that will keep communities like St. Catharines and Windsor working. What we need is a federal partner. What we need is an opposition that won't vote against helping companies keep jobs. They voted against the Stelco assistance package. Were you against that, I ask the member? There is an appropriate role for government to take in working with business. We remain committed to that to protect the jobs and incomes of

Ontarians in Hamilton, in Windsor, in St. Catharines. Thank goodness—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: We've had an astonishing 235,000 good-paying jobs lost in Ontario's manufacturing heartland, and all this government can say is, "It's not my fault. It's the federal government's fault." More than 40,000 forestry jobs have been lost in the north, and all this government can say is, "Please, Mr. Harper, just treat us like any other have-not province."

Well, the people of Ontario aren't buying the Premier's lame lines. They want this government to take responsibility, not shirk it. When will you finally quit playing the blame game and start protecting the jobs that are the lifeblood of Ontario communities?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I never thought I'd see the day when the Ontario NDP stands so firmly behind Stephen Harper.

This government is taking responsibility. This government is delivering a five-point package that is protecting our economy and helping to maintain jobs. I would invite the party opposite, instead of just talking about things, to put real proposals on the table. Explain to Ontarians why you voted against \$9.9 billion in infrastructure money. Tell unemployed Ontarians why you voted against more than a billion dollars for skills training. Tell Ontarians why you voted against targeted tax cuts for our manufacturers that are designed to help protect Ontario jobs. Tell them why you voted against it.

This government is taking appropriate measures with appropriate tools, recognizing—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. This afternoon in the House, we will be discussing the issue of providing opportunities for young skilled workers in Ontario by changing the journeymen tradesperson to apprenticeship ratio from its current 3 to 1, which puts Ontario at the back of the pack in Canada, to a fair and reasonable ratio of 1 to 1.

Both you and the Premier have used the excuse of safety to avoid dealing with this matter. If this was a safety issue, then I think you would be on the phone screaming at the Liberal Premiers in BC and in New Brunswick, both of whom provide their skilled workers with 1-to-1 ratios.

Minister, I'm not sure if you're planning on being here for the debate this afternoon, so I'd like to take this opportunity to ask you: Do you support changing the current ratio from 3 to 1 into a fair and reasonable ratio of 1 to 1?

Hon. John Milloy: I appreciate the member's question. We've had a chance to discuss this issue a number

of times in the House, and I just want to put some facts on the record.

First of all, we're one of the first governments in the history of Ontario to make apprenticeships a priority. Under our watch, we have seen an increase of 50,000 apprenticeships, which is quite extraordinary when you look at the dismal record of the last government that was in power.

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The member opposite likes to go on about a 3-to-1 ratio in the electrical sector. The fact is that this ratio only applies to larger companies. Smaller contractors, who represent the majority of electrical companies, are governed by a 1-to-1 ratio.

We are committed to improving and reforming the apprenticeship system. Based on industry advice, we have changed eight ratios in the construction trades during our time in government, as opposed to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I just want to put on the record for the minister that the PC Party introduced the first apprenticeship program. So your history is wrong. You can't continue to duck and dodge this important matter at the expense of young and eager workers.

We also know that the colleges are well suited to teach skilled trades—they are getting that part—but what the people need is for you to remove that bottleneck that happens the minute they're done their schooling. They can't get their hands on training to complete the apprenticeship because of your ratios.

This afternoon, there are going to be many apprentices here at Queen's Park. Are you telling us this morning that Dalton McGuinty and you, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, are saying to those young people, even though you encourage them to drop everything and obtain a skilled trade, that they've made a mistake in their career choice to become skilled tradespersons? Yes or no: Do you support changing the journeyman-to-apprentice ratio in Ontario to 1 to 1?

Hon. John Milloy: I am very proud of the emphasis that we've put on apprenticeship training under our government. Let me give you a few facts about the PC Party. In their first three years, they had 37,000 new registrations; the Liberals, 60,000 new registrations. In their second mandate, they increased new registrations by over 30,000; we have doubled the number of annual registrations to over 60,000 in our first three years.

We have said over and over that we acknowledge the fact that we need increasing reforms and modernizations to the apprenticeship system. We looked for the best advice from Mr. Tim Armstrong, a respected expert in the field, who came out with a report a number of months ago which has been available to the public. That report made a very thoughtful and innovative recommendation for a college of trades, which we want to proceed with. I ask members opposite to join us in making sure that we have a college of trades to strengthen the system and to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Peter Kormos: To the Acting Premier: What did the McGuinty Liberals do to protect the 800 John Deere, Welland, jobs that have been shipped to Mexico?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To those families affected by that decision, our government continues to be concerned about them, and all others. We have made a number of investments across a range of sectors that have helped our economy weather the storm in manufacturing that is being felt all over North America.

To suggest that there are not challenges and that we can fix every problem simply is not accurate. The investments we've made in manufacturing, including the Next Generation of Jobs Fund, have helped protect a number of jobs, including producing new jobs which we are announcing today. There's more to be done. Those families in Welland affected by this need a government that is on their side, and they know that this government is, based on the investments, based on the undertakings—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Some 800 jobs out of 1,000 that week alone, thousands more in the months preceding. I ask the government one more time. The workers in Welland don't need the Premier to wring his hands and tell them he feels their pain. He can send them a damn Hallmark card that says the same thing. They need work. They need jobs. What is this government doing to protect the jobs of workers in Welland, Niagara, across southern Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We were involved immediately, upon notification, with Welland. We are continuing to make investments in the manufacturing sector to help keep jobs, recognizing the tragedy of those job losses in Welland and job losses in factories across North America, indeed in the western world in the manufacturing sector.

There is no easy answer to this challenge and anybody who suggests that there is one is wrong. You need do no more than watch what was going on in the United States yesterday evening to come to terms with the order of magnitude of what the North American economy, indeed the world economy, is faced with. To suggest that any government can solve every problem is wrong. The solutions we've laid out are a good help, they're the right direction, and we'll continue to find innovative ways to work with those families who are dealing with the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. Many constituents in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham are concerned about the proposed construction of a 350-megawatt, single-cycle,

natural gas-fired generating plant in the northern York region. Some municipal leaders and citizen advocacy organizations have also expressed their concern. There have been conflicting reports about the need for this generating facility, especially since you, as the new minister, have made it clear that you're going to be focusing a lot on conservation and renewables.

Minister, what reassurance can you offer my constituents and the affected citizens of northern York region that the proposed power plant is needed?

Hon. George Smitherman: I want to thank the honourable member for her interest in this and I know that other members have also been expressing interest in this. I think it's important to know, first off, as it relates to our electricity system, that reliability is job one. In the circumstances of York region, because it's an intensely growing spot, we do have some risk with respect to reliability. We have to recognize that the residents of York region have previously opposed transmission upgrades, which would have brought more power from off site, and that with the 3% projection in growth each year for electricity demand we really do get into a very vulnerable spot. As the reliability goes, the premise of the weakest link certainly comes into play.

Conservation is part and parcel of the mix. We anticipate 56 megawatts of saving in the northern part of York region, but as we look to the pressures of peak demand when people turn up the heat or turn on the air conditioning, the sufficiency of supply is not there, and that's why it's necessary to move forward with this peaking plant in the northern York region.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I know that the citizens of my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham, and indeed all Ontarians, understand the need for an adequate and reliable supply of power for our homes and businesses. My community has been working hard to reduce their energy consumption through a variety of conservation programs. This year, in his 2007 annual report, the Chief Energy Conservation Officer reported that Ontario had met its peak demand reduction target of 1,350 megawatts by 2007.

Last Thursday, at a speech to the Ontario Energy Association, you made an announcement about the government's integrated power system plan. In that announcement, you directed the OPA to review a modest portion of the IPSP, including the section about conservation. Can you tell this House what those changes were and how it will help the citizens of my riding?

Hon. George Smitherman: On the matter of conservation, the integrated power system plan has a very aggressive target of 6,300 megawatts. It is aggressive; everybody, I think, acknowledges that. What we want to make sure of is that the progress that we've made to date can be sustained, and that we can achieve those numbers. In part, we'll take a look at whether there are prospects to achieve them on an even more aggressive time frame than that which has been established.

In the province of Ontario, 75% of our energy supply last year was met by what I call the two ends—Niagara

Falls and nuclear—that is, the combination of our nuclear assets and our hydroelectric assets provided about 75% of our needs. We've made good progress, in fact, progress better than was first anticipated, with respect to the implementation of renewables into our supply mix.

Last week, I asked the Ontario Power Authority, working through their IPSP, to take a look at whether we could offer more aggressive targets with respect to renewables and whether those conservation targets, which are aggressive, could be met in a more timely manner. These are matters that are currently under review.

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APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. I want to read from an e-mail that was sent to Dan Racicot, a member of the provincial advisory committee, or PAC, on construction and maintenance electricians. It's from Anika Fernando, an employee in your ministry. The e-mail asks Mr. Racicot to fill out a form to update the information in your ministry's database. Ms. Fernando goes on to give directions on how to fill out the form, and she says, "Please note that for the union member column, 'True' means you have a union affiliation and 'False' means you do not."

Minister, can you tell me why it's so important that your ministry ask for this information of whether you're a union member or not?

Hon. John Milloy: I'd be happy to look at the document the member is referring to, but again we go back to the first principle, which is that we look to the industry for their best advice in terms of apprenticeships and moving forward, and I'm very proud of the progress that we've made.

Our government has freely acknowledged the fact that we need further reforms in terms of our apprenticeship system and we need to look at how we get that advice from the industry. That's why, based on a recommendation that was brought forward by noted industry expert Tim Armstrong, we're proceeding with the establishment of a college of trades, and we've asked Kevin Whitaker, the head of the Ontario Labour Relations Board, to undertake work over the coming months to put together the framework for such a college, which is going to look at a variety of issues facing apprenticeships, keeping in mind how we can strengthen the system and how we can make sure more people are coming into the skilled trades and receiving the training they need.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Well, again today you've been hiding behind these provincial advisory committees, or PACs, and saying they are the ones that set the apprenticeship ratios in Ontario and decide how many young people will actually get an apprentice position in Ontario. But it's obvious from looking at the lists of the membership of the PACs that you've been stacking these PACs with your union buddies. They have no interest at all—in fact, they have a vested interest in ensuring that

the ratios aren't changed to one journeyman to one apprentice, like they are in other provinces.

Let me give you some examples. The brick and stone masonry PAC has four union members and three business reps. The drywallers, acoustic and lathing applicator PAC is stacked with members of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters. The boilermakers PAC is pretty well completely filled up by members of the boilermakers union, Local 128.

Minister, again, these unions have no interest at all in changing the ratios, so you're giving us nothing but rhetoric. You're hiding behind the PACs. What are you doing, and why won't you—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, again, I find it a little passing strange. We've seen ratios change eight times under our watch; when they were in government, they changed none. If this was such a big issue, why didn't they change the ratios when they had the opportunity?

Again, we look for the best advice from PACs on how to strengthen the system. Let me give you one example: construction and maintenance electricians. Let's talk about the success in that field. New registrations have increased by 32% since 2003. Completion rates have increased by 151% since 2003.

To repeat again, we fully acknowledge the need for further reforms in the apprenticeship system. That's why we asked for the thoughtful advice of Mr. Tim Armstrong, a noted expert in the field, and that's why we're proceeding with his advice in terms of a college of trades. Again, I invite all opposition members, I invite all members of this House, to be part of this process to make sure we have the strongest apprenticeship system in Canada.

PROPANE EXPLOSION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services. Will the minister hold Sunrise Propane accountable for the \$1.9-million cleanup?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Thanks very much. First of all, let me say that our Ministry of the Environment was on the scene almost immediately after it happened. Our main concern is to make sure that the health and safety of the people in the area is protected.

Secondly, we issued a number of orders against Sunrise to make sure that the cleanup was done in the proper fashion. When they didn't come through with it, the city of Toronto, I think rightfully, then took action to make sure the people of that area were protected.

As Shelley Carroll said in the paper today, they appreciated the work that the ministry has done there over the last couple of months, particularly early on, to make sure the people of that area were best protected.

Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, but the question was, who's going to end up holding the bag around the cost of the cleanup? The province is ultimately responsible for overseeing the propane industry. Municipal councillors in Toronto argue, very rightly, that the \$1.9-million bill should not be covered by the local property taxpayer. If Sunrise Propane is pushed into bankruptcy and cannot cover the costs of cleanup, will this minister commit right now to fully covering the cleanup costs incurred by the city of Toronto?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, I think the city of Toronto took the right action. When no action was taken by Sunrise, they took action to make sure that the site was cleaned up. Number two, they now have the ability, in legislation, to go after Sunrise to make sure that they pay for the cost that Sunrise itself should have had to pay initially. Why don't we wait and see what happens there, and then later on we can always discuss what would happen in the event that Sunrise can't come across.

The number one priority was to make absolutely certain that the people in that area were protected. I personally went out there, spoke to a number of the people who were involved in the cleanup of the site and spoke to the MOE people that were on-site as well. I think that the whole operation from this terrible event was handled in a very professional manner by all concerned.

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE FUNDING

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, there is no doubt that more and more students are seeking a post-secondary education and are choosing Ontario schools to obtain it. In my city of Hamilton, Mohawk College and McMaster University have seen the numbers of applicants surge over the past four years. In fact, I understand that post-secondary enrolment is up by 25% in Ontario since 2004, with 100,000 more students attending college or university. Although this is good news, there is no doubt that increased enrolment is putting additional pressures on our colleges and universities. I would like to know, what is the minister doing to ensure that colleges and universities have the means necessary to support this growth?

Hon. John Milloy: I would like to thank the member not only for her question but for her commitment to post-secondary education, both in Mohawk College and McMaster University, which are part of her community.

The member is correct. We've seen a tremendous growth in post-secondary education in the province, which is something that I think all of us should celebrate—100,000 more students. At the same time, we have to make sure that there's the capacity there to support those students, and one of the thrusts of our skills-to-jobs action plan, as well as last fall's economic statement, has been on the infrastructure side of the equation. We saw last year alone almost \$700 million invested in colleges and universities to maintain and enhance their facilities, as well as meet their capital needs. Over the

summer, the Premier and I announced \$190 million for strategic skills training projects at a number of colleges, including Mohawk, and I'm pleased to announce that Mohawk College received \$9.2 million for the —

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: I want to tell the minister that when I've had the opportunity to meet with the administrations of Mohawk College and McMaster, what they tell me is that institutions need more than investments in infrastructure to accommodate the growing numbers of students in their classrooms. They worry about what's happening with the faculty-to-student ratios and the increased demand for graduate spaces. Could the minister tell us what is being done to address the pressures caused by enrolment growth at Mohawk and McMaster and all other post-secondary institutions in the province?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, I'm happy to address the operational, but if I can just put it on the record, it was \$9.2 million for the final phase of Mohawk's Skilled Trades and Apprenticeship Research, Resources and Training Institute, more commonly known as the STARRT Institute. But the member is correct, it's more than bricks and mortar. We are committed to ensuring that our province's universities and colleges have the means to support the growth. I'm happy to say we've increased operating funding for colleges and universities by 58% since 2003. That's \$1.5 billion. At Mohawk, operating grants have increased by 59% since 2003. That translates to an additional \$337 million that we've invested in Mohawk to make sure that we have excellence in education and they can accommodate this tremendous growth which all of us should celebrate.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. In 2005, as part of the Places to Grow initiative, your government mandated growth in my riding of Halton. Indeed, the region is now the fastest-growing region in all of Canada. However, your growth plan was dangerously incomplete and health care infrastructure must accompany mandated economic and population growth, but in Halton the equation is lopsided. As the population skyrockets, the hospitals are overloaded and staff are overworked. Minister, why has the construction of the new hospital in Oakville been delayed and why is the expansion of the Milton hospital yet to begin?

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Hon. David Caplan: One of the interesting effects of having so many hospital projects—over 100 that we've been able to support throughout the province—has been the fact that we're projecting what the trades needs are. Infrastructure Ontario has done that work and has determined that there are capacity issues as far as the ability to respond to tenders and provide the trades. That's why they have been able to contact a number of hospitals or proponents who are on the project list and let them know

what the re-staging plans were. I would just say that the member for Oakville, Kevin Flynn, has made a very strong representation. If there is the ability to move them up on the list, we would be very supportive of doing so.

I would say to the member, in relation to other projects, that, yes, while 100 hospital projects is, in size and scope, the largest expansion in generations in Ontario, there is still more work to do—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Minister, your excuses mean nothing to the people of Oakville, the people of Milton and the people of Burlington who face overcrowded emergency rooms. The fact of the matter is, your government insisted and mandated the growth in Milton, Oakville and Burlington. Your responsibility to provide those people with health care has been absolutely, totally lacking in the process.

Minister, when is Oakville going to get their hospital, which they desperately need? The current hospital is full to the seams, it's bursting at the seams. They need that new hospital and they need it now. When will that hospital commence construction?

Hon. David Caplan: I would refer the member to Statistics Canada and the census data from 2001 to 2006. The town of Milton grew 75%. No one on this side of the House or any government has dictated that Halton region grow at any particular pace. But look at the historic rates of growth that have taken place in Halton region and other municipalities over the past number of decades. In fact, the support for Trafalgar Memorial is still proceeding. It's proceeding on a re-scoped schedule. We are eager to see it move ahead. But I would add for the member that we do recognize that growth areas in the province face some significant challenges. That's why my predecessor brought in specific growth funding to support health care, particularly in the 905 and in the GTA. The 2008 budget some—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

SIGN LANGUAGE IN SCHOOLS

Mr. Rosario Marchese: A question to the Minister of Education: The Ontario College of Teachers is preparing to set minimum American Sign Language/LSQ standards for teachers of deaf students. However, the Ontario College of Teachers is waiting for approval from the Ministry of Education to allow them to develop and implement ASL/LSQ proficiency policies before they can develop and implement the ASL curriculum in the classroom. In light of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and the Ontario Human Rights Code, and in light of your own regulation statements in this regard last year, when can we expect you to instruct the Ontario College of Teachers to do the job they want to do?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm very glad to be able to speak to the issue of ASL capacity in the system. I want to acknowledge the work of Gary Malkowski on this. He has been a fabulous, tireless advocate for building ASL

capacity in the system. I can say that a lot of the work that we have done over the last couple of years can be directly attributed to the work that he's done with us in the ministry.

We have developed a draft ASL curriculum and we've assigned extra teachers to provincial schools to help develop that ASL curriculum. Nipissing University has worked with the provincial schools branch to offer additional qualifications for teachers of the deaf. We had 50 teachers this summer at ASL immersion camps and two provincial school teachers received grants through the Teacher Learning and Leadership Program to provide ASL training.

So my answer to the member opposite is that I will work with the Ontario College of Teachers as part of our overall strategy to increase ASL capacity in the system.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I understand that you acknowledge the work of Gary Malkowski. My question was, when will the Minister of Education authorize the Ontario College of Teachers to proceed in developing and implementing the ASL/LSQ proficiency policies in the classroom? That's the question. We understand Gary has done a lot of work; you're working with him, you're doing something. But specific to this question, and specific to the fact that tomorrow there's going to be an International Day of Sign Language Rights and deaf education rally, might you be willing to go to the rally and tell them when you're going to say to the Ontario College of Teachers, "Here are the rules. Here's what we expect. Now go out and do your work"? Will you do that?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I actually am meeting with the Ontario College of Teachers today. It certainly is one of the things I will talk to them about. I am actively engaged in this file, whether it's ASL or LSQ, which is the Québécois sign language. It is extremely important to me as a minister and to us as a government that we improve ASL/LSQ capacity in the system. I will be talking with the Ontario College of Teachers; I will work with them to allow for that capacity to be built. We changed the regulation; the law had been brought in by the NDP but the regulation was never brought in. We brought in the regulation that allowed for ASL delivery in the classroom on the part of school boards. I will continue to work to improve capacity and I will be talking to the Ontario College of Teachers immediately.

LANGUAGE TRAINING

Mr. Bob Delaney: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Roughly half of all newcomers to Canada make Ontario their home. These people bring with them important social, economic and cultural contributions, and they're a vital part of our province's diverse workforce. In western Mississauga, one can literally hear scores of different languages, regional dialects and accents. This cultural and linguistic diversity is one of our principle strengths; in fact, it's a strategic asset that allows our province to compete with the world.

However, this same linguistic diversity is often a newcomer's biggest challenge. Newcomers come to Ontario with many skills. The ability to speak English or French is often not one of them, and is in fact a barrier to meaningful employment. People in Mississauga know that getting their careers restarted is their top priority. How does your ministry help equip newcomers with language skills to reduce this barrier to employment?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member from Mississauga—Streetsville. My ministry is certainly aware of the important role that language plays in finding meaningful employment. The ability to speak English or French opens up doors of opportunity for newcomers. This is why I am pleased to tell the honourable member that my ministry invests almost \$60 million annually in language training for over 100,000 newcomers. This training program is available in many levels of language ability and all around the province. Since 2003, our government has increased funding to adult English as a second language and French as a second language by 22%. These programs are part of our commitment to enhance economic growth by investing in the skills and training of newcomers.

Mr. Bob Delaney: The unemployment of newcomers continues to be a major issue across Ontario. Newcomers to Ontario tend to be very highly educated, and they're strongly motivated to work in the fields that they were trained in. Our newcomers often find themselves with very senior and well-developed skills in the trades and management and in their professions. Their experience and skills are vital for us, as a province, to address our economic growth. Their skills are in high demand, and Ontario needs those very skills in our labour market. Very often, highly skilled newcomers have some knowledge of English or French, but not enough to ensure employment in their field of training or in their area of expertise. What are we doing as a province to break down barriers for newcomers, so that they can find employment in their field of training or expertise?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the member again for the question. Newcomers are vital to our economy. As our population ages, the Conference Board of Canada estimates that by 2011, newcomers will account for 100% of our net labour force growth. Since 2003, our government has invested over \$600 million to deliver services to newcomers: on language training, both English and French training programs; Global Experience Ontario mentorship; partnering with private sectors; and enacted Bill 124 to facilitate the recognition of foreign credentials. We are the government. We understand that a strong Canada needs a strong Ontario, and one of our greatest strengths is in these newcomers.

1140

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, I've heard from parents in Oxford whose children have develop-

mental disabilities and are concerned that under Bill 77, your application centres will create more red tape and take precious resources away from the people who need them. We have heard reports that, you, Minister, have said that the centres will be funded from existing resources. Parents want to know, how can you take money away from their children to fund red tape?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm very pleased to rise today and talk about Bill 77. Bill 77 has been developed under our leadership. This party is going out and asking questions in the House to misinform the people of what is in the bill.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask that you withdraw that comment, please.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I withdraw that, but I still think that that is what is going on.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No. Please, clearly withdraw.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I withdraw that.

This Bill 77 will help in three special areas—and many more—but I'm going to talk about the three special areas. It will improve service. People will only have to go to one place to apply for service and support. Prior to amending Bill 77, parents had to go to different places to make applications. So this will simplify it for the parents.

Mr. Hardeman: Well, Minister, I wish that you had been happy to get up to answer the question rather than talk about Bill 77, because the people in Oxford wanted to hear the answer. The current system isn't working.

A mother in Oxford said: "A crisis already exists in Oxford county. Young adults are left at home with nothing to do all day but regress in development. There are approximately 45 adults that have applied for Passport funding and only one quarter have received some type of funding, and most not enough for meaningful support. Others have been approved but no funding is available."

Minister, can you tell these people how long it will be that you will keep them waiting before you give them the support that they qualify for and need today?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Passport was initiated by this government in 2005. We are a victim of our success. There is a lot of demand out there, and we have invested millions of dollars in that program, actually \$27 million in this program. And every time we propose improvements in the developmental sector, they vote against it.

What had they done when they were in power? The legacy they left was a 22% decrease in social assistance and all services that help those with developmental services. This government has actually invested \$1.5 billion—every year we are investing. We know that the need is there and we will continue to help that sector. We will continue to support the parents who keep their loved ones at home.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Labour. By the way, congratulations on your new portfolio.

Over the past year, I've worked with the Ontario Federation of Labour and injured workers, demanding that the flawed experience rating program be completely cancelled. The WSIB is slapping the wrists of the companies where a worker has been killed on the job. These companies lose their experience rating for a whole year while families lose their loved ones forever. When will this minister stand up for injured workers and completely abolish the flawed experience rating program? And while the doors to review at the WSIB have been opened, will this minister throw the whole organization wide open and provide the Provincial Auditor and the Ombudsman with the oversight needed to conduct a complete review?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I'd like to thank the member for his question on two fronts: first, on bringing forward this very important issue. Also, the member was actually my critic in my previous role as the Minister of Tourism. I was always anticipating a question, but they never seemed to come.

I look forward to working with the member on this issue and many other matters that affect our Ontario workers and their health and safety and, for sure, to reducing the workplace injuries, as we all in this chamber work towards. I'm also very excited about this new role, continuing with the many successes of my predecessor under the leadership of Premier McGuinty.

One of the things that we have done—as the member knows, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board is an arm's-length agency from the Ministry of Labour. They are undergoing an internal review. They've brought in experts to look at experience rating—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The time for question period has ended.

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the current Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital is fully utilized; and

"Whereas Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital was sized to serve a town of Oakville population of 130,000 people," and the current population is now well over 170,000 people; and

"Whereas the population of Oakville continues to grow as mandated by 'Places to Grow,' an act of the Ontario Legislature, and is projected to be 187,500 in 2012, the completion date for a new facility in the original time frame; and

"Whereas residents of the town of Oakville are entitled to the same quality of health care as all Ontarians; and

"Whereas hospital facilities in the surrounding area do not have capacity to absorb Oakville's overflow needs;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure take the necessary steps to ensure the new Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital be completed under its original timelines without further delay."

I put my name on this petition of well over 1,000 names.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly sent to me from within the Credit Valley Hospital and autographed by a number of recent visitors to the hospital. It reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition and to ask page Paige to carry it for me.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition from the good people of Milton.

"Whereas Milton District Hospital was designed to serve a population of 30,000 and the town of Milton is now home to more than 69,000 people"—more than double—"and is still growing rapidly; and

"Whereas the town of Milton is the fastest-growing town in Canada and was forced into that rate of growth by an act of the Ontario Legislature called 'Places to Grow'; and

"Whereas the town of Milton is projected to have a population of 101,600 people in 2014, which is the earliest date an expansion could be completed; and

"Whereas the current Milton facility is too small to accommodate Milton's explosive growth and parts of the hospital prohibit the integration of new outpatient clinics and diagnostic technologies;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the Minister of Energy and

Infrastructure take the necessary steps to ensure timely approval and construction of the expansion to Milton District Hospital."

I'm pleased to add my name to this petition of well over 1,000 names.

1150

GUN CONTROL

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition I'd like to read on behalf of my colleague from Scarborough Southwest, and it's signed by a number of people in his riding, especially many from Fir Valley court. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas access to guns is a major cause behind an increase in violent crime;

"Whereas such crime has been steadily increasing over a number of years;

"Whereas current preventive initiatives have been put in place to stem the tide of violent crime but a direct approach targeting gun usage has not been undertaken;

"Whereas signs specifically stating a zero tolerance attitude toward gun use in the commission of gun violence need to be created and erected to demonstrate our collective disdain for this type of activity;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the minister of public safety to implement an initiative to construct a zero tolerance gun usage sign and have these signs placed on all province of Ontario property, such as major roads and buildings."

I'm pleased to sign this petition and to ask page Imaan to carry it for me.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition here from the good people in Oakville regarding their hospital.

"Whereas the current Oakville-Trafalgar Memorial Hospital is fully utilized; and

"Whereas Oakville-Trafalgar Memorial Hospital was sized to serve a town of Oakville population of 130,000 people and the current population is now 170,000;

"Whereas the population of Oakville continues to grow as mandated by Places to Grow, an act of the Ontario Legislature, and is projected to be 187,500 people in 2012, the completion date for a new facility in the original time frame; and

"Whereas residents of the town of Oakville are entitled to the same quality of health care as all Ontarians; and

"Whereas hospital facilities in the surrounding area do not have capacity to absorb Oakville's overflow needs;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure take the necessary steps to ensure the new Oakville-Trafalgar Memorial Hospital be completed under its original timelines without further delay."

I'm pleased to add my signature to this very worthwhile petition of over 1,000 names.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Kim Craiton: I'm pleased to introduce a petition. Although it's not from my riding of Niagara Falls, it is in support of Bill 33, and it's from Ajax and Whitby. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents as requested in Bill 33....

"Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant's willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child.

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents."

I'm pleased to sign my signature in support of the bill and give this to page Kritika to present to the House.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Milton District Hospital was designed to serve a population of 30,000 and the town of Milton is now home to more than 69,000 people, and is still growing rapidly; and

"Whereas the town of Milton is the fastest-growing town in Canada and was forced into that rate of growth by an act of the Ontario Legislature, called 'Places to Grow'; and

"Whereas the town of Milton is projected to have a population of 101,600 in 2014, which is the earliest date an expansion could be completed; and

"Whereas the current Milton facility is too small to accommodate Milton's explosive growth and parts of the

hospital prohibit the integration of new outpatient clinics and diagnostic technologies;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure take the necessary steps to ensure the timely approval and construction of the expansion to Milton District Hospital."

And as I am in support, I've affixed my signature and given it to Connor.

VIOLENCE IN ENTERTAINMENT

Mr. Mario Sergio: I have a petition which I would like to read to the House.

"Whereas the movie Righteous Violence marketing tag line, 'Most people respect the badge; everybody respects the gun,' condones, encourages and incites violence, in blatant violation of code 14 of the Advertising Standards Canada regulations;

"Whereas we, as concerned citizens and parents, object to exploiting of our youth through this messaging of condoning guns, disrespect of authority and violence, especially in light of the many recent shootings in our communities;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that Alliance Films, the Canadian distributor of the movie, immediately remove all billboards and advertising with the offensive tag line.

"We also invite Al Pacino and Robert De Niro to come to our communities to bring a message of hope to our young people instead of promoting guns."

I do concur with the petitioners, and I'm happy to affix my signature to it.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Milton District Hospital was designed to serve a population of 30,000 and the town of Milton is now home to more than 69,000 people, and is still growing rapidly; and

"Whereas the town of Milton is the fastest-growing town in Canada and was forced into that rate of growth by an act of the Ontario Legislature called 'Places to Grow'; and

"Whereas the town of Milton is projected to have a population of 101,600 in 2014, which is the earliest date an expansion could be completed; and

"Whereas the current Milton facility is too small to accommodate Milton's explosive growth and parts of the hospital prohibit the integration of new outpatient clinics and diagnostic technologies;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure take the necessary steps to ensure the timely approval and construction of the expansion to Milton District Hospital."

Thank you very much for the opportunity to read this petition into the record.

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased to join with my colleague from Newmarket-Aurora on his petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the legacy of Pope John Paul II reflects his lifelong commitment to international understanding, peace and the defence of equality and human rights;

"Whereas his legacy has an all-embracing meaning that is particularly relevant to Canada's multi-faith and multicultural traditions;

"Whereas, as one of the great spiritual leaders of contemporary times, Pope John Paul II visited Ontario during his pontificate of more than 25 years and, on his visits, was enthusiastically greeted by Ontario's diverse religious and cultural communities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to grant speedy passage into law of the private member's bill ... An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day."

It's a pretty good petition and certainly a good cause. I'm pleased to sign it and to ask page Imaan to carry it for me.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There being no further petitions, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1159 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I rise today to address a very dire situation in my riding of Halton. I rise on behalf of the unfortunate sick and their families who are facing inadequate health care in one of Ontario's most prosperous regions. In 2005, the McGuinty government mandated Halton as a "place to grow." They said it was a comprehensive, long-term economic plan. They promised that the plan would include infrastructure to support growth. Halton is growing; there is no doubt about that. Oakville continues to expand, while Milton is bursting at the seams, and the fastest-growing community in Canada.

When the government approved construction of the new Oakville-Trafalgar Memorial Hospital, the people cheered, but now, before the first shovel hit the ground, the project has been delayed for over a year and the people are worried. Emergency rooms are overcrowded. Families travel long distances to find available services in Hamilton or Mississauga. Health care staff are overworked and tired. If ever, God forbid, there was a health crisis in Halton, I'm not sure if we could cope. Given this government's record on health and their inability to

foresee or deal with C. difficile or listeriosis, we can't rule anything out. We must be prepared.

If the government wants us to grow so rapidly, they have to go all the way. It is in the control of the Minister of Health, the Minister of Infrastructure and the Premier. They tell us that it's a capacity problem; the problem, however, is that Halton is on the bottom of the list after being mandated to grow. The people of Halton deserve much better.

VIOLENCE IN ENTERTAINMENT

Mr. Mario Sergio: Today, I bring to your attention an issue that gives me great concern, and it is regarding the promotion of guns through recent movie advertising. I'm appalled by the actions taken by movie advertisers and marketers regarding the new Al Pacino-Robert De Niro film, for the irresponsible message they are sending in trying to promote their latest film, *Righteous Kill*.

"Most people respect the badge; everybody respects the gun," their message states. This is a terrible way to promote box office success at the expense and detriment of our young people. Mr. Pacino and Mr. De Niro probably did not even reflect on the significance of their message, but this is definitely not a positive message, and most definitely not the right message reaching our youth.

Our young people need mentors who can play a leadership role, from whom they can be taught respect, the value of human life and all the wonderful potential life has to offer, including growing up with the ability to give and receive respect and dignity. I'm sure that Al Pacino and Robert De Niro would agree that while their message is healthy for the box office, it is deadly among our youth.

While I personally admire their acting qualities, I would challenge both Pacino and De Niro to recognize and admit that such a message is wrong and immoral. I would invite them to come to my riding and bring a message of hope to our youth.

LEGION WEEK

Mr. Frank Klees: I rise to acknowledge that this is Legion Week, and ask all members to join me in paying tribute to the men and women who support our veterans and those who are serving our armed forces through legions across the province.

Legion Week gives us all pause to reflect and honour those Canadian men and women who gave and continue to give so much in their service to our country. This week at Legion Halls in Newmarket and Aurora and across the province, there are ample opportunities for us to see and be inspired by the historical reminders of the great conflicts in which our veterans served and in which many of their comrades-in-arms paid the ultimate price to protect the values and freedoms that we hold in common as Canadians.

During Legion Week 2008, we pay special tribute to the fallen Canadian peacekeepers in Afghanistan as we

remember their grieving families with the assurance that they and their sacrifice will always be remembered and deeply cherished by us all. On behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, I gratefully acknowledge our veterans for all they have done and continue to do to improve our quality of life, while constantly reminding us of the heroism and self-sacrifice of Canada's military heroes in all generations.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Tonight, Hamilton will be out in full force to protest a major restructuring being proposed to our city's hospitals. The proposal calls for closing a hospital emergency department completely to adults. Of the many people I've spoken to, very few want this to happen, but it's being rammed through against the community's wishes. The public must be given an opportunity to be heard on this issue.

Trying to get some accountability is like a game of Ping-Pong. I've written to the Minister of Health, the local health integration network—the LHIN—and the hospital's CEO. The McGuinty government says, "Speak to the hospital." The CEO says, "Speak to the LHIN." The LHIN says, "There's no time to consult. The government's new law forces decisions from a LHIN within 60 days of receiving a proposal."

Both Hamilton Health Sciences Centre and the LHIN are non-elected bodies, yet the government is elected and is hiding behind these unaccountable boards to avoid accountability for a restructuring that very few people support. Hamilton paramedics warned last night that ambulance services will suffer under the proposed plan and costs will rise. Doctors, nurses and other hospital staff continue to express deep concern about the changes. Our city council has demanded hearings. Hamilton and District Labour Council has pledged an all-out battle.

The people of Hamilton aren't going to take this lying down. The loss of a hospital emergency department for adults carries serious consequences: an erosion of access to quality health care. It's hard to believe this is happening under the McGuinty government. It feels more like the Harris government.

REAL PEOPLE CAMPAIGN

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: Wilma Arthurs is an amateur photographer with a great talent and a great passion. More importantly, Wilma is the mother of a 17-year-old intellectually challenged daughter. She is a volunteer advocate who sits on our local adult developmental services planning group, as well as being a director with the Community Living Sarnia-Lambton board. She's also a member of the Lifelong Caregivers Support Group of Sarnia-Lambton, some of whom have joined us here today.

Wilma started a grassroots project this spring, called the Real People Campaign. She has taken photographs of 29 families of children and young adults with develop-

mental challenges and has accompanied these photos with the stories of each of these families. Those stories convey the love these families have for their special family member, and it also recounts the hardships facing these families. The photos are amazing in their simplicity and intensity. They portray real families—real people just like our families—but these families have a unique challenge that they face every day.

Wilma's campaign is gaining momentum. Windsor is now documenting their families in the same way, and it is hoped that many other areas will join them in putting a tangible and real face to these families for all of us. I want to extend our thanks and support to people like Wilma and the Lifelong Caregivers Support Group of Sarnia-Lambton for their daily struggle and their loving approach to life.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Sylvia Jones: The Minister of Community and Social Services, when responding to my question yesterday about why individuals with developmental disabilities are not given the same rights as all Ontario citizens, gave an answer that needs to be corrected.

Under Liberal Bill 77, individuals living in group homes will have their right to privacy removed by this government. If you live in a group home in Ontario, you can expect that at any time an inspector may, without warrant and without asking for your consent, enter your home. The minister said we're doing exactly what we're doing in long-term care. It's not true.

I'd like to read into the record the actual section of the Long-Term Care Act that deals with the protection of privacy, for the benefit of the minister: "No program supervisor shall enter a place that is being used as a dwelling, except with the consent of the occupier or under the authority of a warrant issued under section 158 of the Provincial Offences Act."

The minister needs to do the right thing and amend the legislation to remove entry without consent. I would respectfully ask that the minister correct her own record in this House so that Ontarians understand how the McGuinty Liberals are removing the rights of Ontario citizens with developmental disabilities.

CORAL PLACE

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I rise today to congratulate everyone at Coral Place, in my riding of Mississauga-Brampton South, on the occasion of their 15th anniversary. Coral Place is a non-profit housing complex located at Highway 10 and Eglinton, and features 103 units of affordable housing for the people of Mississauga. But more than that, Coral Place residents connect with each other, socialize and enjoy special events. The residents have not only made Coral Place their home but also their community.

I would like to acknowledge Dawn Langtry and all of the staff for the wonderful work they do in making Coral Place so special for so many people. I would also like to thank everyone at the Federation of Chinese Canadian Professionals for all of the generous support they have provided Coral Place over the past 15 years. Finally, to the tenants' association and to all the residents of Coral Place, happy anniversary.

1310

BRIDGE CROSSING

Mr. Phil McNeely: On September 4, the primary findings of the interprovincial crossing in the national capital region environmental assessment were released by the National Capital Commission, Ministry of Transportation and the Ministère des Transports de Québec. The preliminary results are the product of a review of the technical issues and social and environmental impacts of the crossings. The panel chose Kettle Island as the preferred crossing site from among 10 alternative sites proposed.

It is obvious that the truck traffic is best served with a crossing west of Orléans. Yesterday, public consultations were held in Ottawa to provide a forum for discussion and debate on this decision.

I want to take this brief opportunity to clarify my position on this very important issue to my community of Orléans. I've always been clear that I am in favour of a location for the bridge that minimally impacts Orléans or any other residential community. When the study presented the traffic projections for the new bridge, I realized the major impacts that peak hourly traffic of 2,000 vehicles and 1,000 trucks a day would have on our communities. I changed my support from the Kettle Island location to any location west of Orléans. I have not wavered in my resolve to protect our community, and hope that a solution can still be found that will protect the communities from Manor Park south to the Queensway. I will continue to work with my colleagues, with the city councillors and with my community to resolve issues such as the bridge, the split and the Hunt Club extension.

PAN AMERICAN GAMES

Mr. Mike Colle: I rise in the House today to discuss an exciting opportunity for the province of Ontario and the greater Golden Horseshoe area.

It was recently announced that the government of Ontario, in partnership with Ottawa, would be launching a bid to host the 2015 Pan American Games. These games will provide an economic boost for southern Ontario and bring athletes and spectators from all 42 countries across the Americas to our wonderful province.

The games will provide a boost to the Ontario economy, generating over \$2 billion for the local economy. The games will also bring an estimated 250,000 tourists to the region, who will undoubtedly enjoy the wonderful restaurants, outstanding culture, first-class shopping

centres and entertainment in the Golden Horseshoe area. This immediate economic boost will be in addition to the 17,000 skilled jobs created by the games in a wide range of sectors, from construction to the hospitality industry.

These games will not only cement our place as a world-class travel destination, but the strategic investments we make in the training facilities and event facilities will make southern Ontario a premier destination for Canadian athletes and athletic competitions from all over the world.

I want to encourage all Ontarians to learn more about the bid and the wonderful event that is the 2015 Pan American Games. This, again, will not only be good for the athletes, but it will be good for all of the communities in the Golden Horseshoe, from Niagara to Hamilton and St. Catharines, Toronto, Durham—all across southern Ontario. The Pan Am Games are a win-win situation for all Ontarians.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

1068080 ONTARIO LIMITED ACT, 2008

Mr. Shurman moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr14, An Act to revive 1068080 Ontario Limited.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 85, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

HOME ENERGY RATING ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR L'ÉVALUATION DE L'ÉNERGIE DOMESTIQUE

Mr. McNeely moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 101, An Act respecting energy rating for specified residential buildings / Projet de loi 101, Loi traitant de l'évaluation de l'énergie pour des bâtiments d'habitation précisés.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Phil McNeely: The bill requires the preparation of home energy rating reports with respect to detached and semi-detached homes, and low-rise, multi-unit residential buildings. The requirement to prepare the report applies to persons who sell or lease a building for which a building permit application is made on or after January 1, 2010. For all other buildings, the requirement applies to persons who enter into an agreement for purchase and sale on or after January 1, 2011, and persons who enter into a tenancy agreement on or after January 1, 2012. The report must indicate the energy efficiency of the building in accordance with prescribed methodology and provide any other prescribed information.

SENIORS' OMBUDSMAN ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR L'OMBUDSMAN DES PERSONNES ÂGÉES

Mr. Sergio moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 102, An Act to establish the Seniors' Ombudsman / Projet de loi 102, Loi créant le poste d'ombudsman des personnes âgées.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Mario Sergio: The bill creates the Office of Seniors' Ombudsman to investigate complaints and make recommendations respecting the impact on seniors of the administration of public bodies in Ontario.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC ATHLETES

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Today, I rise to take this opportunity, and it gives me great pleasure, to commend the efforts of the 137 Ontario Olympic athletes and 43 Ontario Paralympic athletes who represented us so proudly at the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics and Paralympics.

Ontario athletes brought home 11 of the 18 medals captured at the Beijing Summer Olympics and 10 of the 50 medals won at the Beijing Summer Paralympics.

At the Summer Olympics, equestrian Eric Lamaze, from Schomberg, won Canada's first ever Olympic gold in individual show jumping. He also helped secure a silver in team jumping with an all-Ontario team that included nine-time Olympian Ian Millar, from Perth; Jill Henselwood, from Oxford Mills; and Mac Cone, from King City.

Canada's flag-bearers for the opening and closing ceremonies were both from Ontario. Adam van Koeverden, from Oakville, bore the flag for the opening ceremonies. Adam won silver in the men's single kayak 500-metre race. Trampoline gymnast Karen Cockburn carried the flag for the closing ceremonies. Karen is one of four Canadian athletes to have medalled at three consecutive Olympic Games.

At the Paralympics, swimmer Chelsey Gotell brought home Ontario's first medals and finished with an amazing total of five medals. In athletics, Ontario Paralympians captured three bronze medals: Jason Dunkerley, of Ottawa, in the 1,500-metre race; Stephanie Reid, of Thornhill, in the 200-metre race; and Brampton's Kyle Pettey in shot put.

Canada's silver-medal winning men's basketball team included three Ontario athletes: Abdi Fatah Dini, Adam Lancia and Christopher Stoutenburg.

Those are just 13 of the 21 medals won by Ontarians.

I want to personally congratulate each and every one of our talented Ontario athletes who trained so hard, and so proudly represented us in Beijing. Their achievements are an inspiration for our children and youth, and for our future generations.

The McGuinty government's Quest for Gold program has helped over 8,000 athletes since 2006. With this year's investment, it has provided \$32.9 million in direct financial assistance to athletes, as well as enhanced coaching, training and expanded competitive opportunities in Ontario.

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Twenty-nine per cent of our Olympians and 26% of our Paralympians were Quest for Gold recipients. Quest for Gold has also provided funding to athletes and facility upgrades through the Road to Excellence program. This program was designed to help Canada finish as one of the top 16 nations in the medal standings in the 2008 Beijing Summer Games.

Similarly, we are investing \$2.5 million in Ontario athletes over the next three years through Own the Podium. The goal of this program is for Canada to finish first overall in medal counts at the 2010 Winter Games in Vancouver.

We are also working hard to bring home more international events. As my colleague from Eglinton-Lawrence just stated, our bid for the 2015 Pan American games, if successful, is projected to inject close to \$2 billion into Ontario's economy by attracting 250,000 tourists and creating an estimated 17,000 jobs. The games would pump a \$1-billion capital investment into sport and recreation, providing much-needed world-class facilities where our amateur athletes can train and compete. It would also leave a long-lasting legacy of new and/or improved community facilities.

Supporting our high-performance athletes will continue to be a priority for Ontario's government. They inspire pride among us all and have proven that Canada can compete with the world's best. Congratulations to all our Olympians and all our Paralympians. Thank you.

DRAPEAU FRANCO-ONTARIEN

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, let me introduce Chris McKillop from Ottawa, who is with us in the audience today.

Chers collègues, il me fait un grand plaisir aujourd'hui de m'adresser à vous à titre de ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones, en cette journée spéciale pour les francophones de l'Ontario.

En effet, c'est le 25 septembre 1975 que M. Gaétan Gervais, professeur d'histoire à l'Université Laurentienne, a conçu le projet de créer un symbole pour les francophones. Il était accompagné d'un groupe d'étudiants dont Jacqueline England, qui a cousu le drapeau. Il y avait aussi Michel Dupuis, Yves Tassé et Donald Obonsawin, ce dernier que plusieurs d'entre vous avaient connu par la suite en tant que haut fonctionnaire au gouvernement provincial.

Le drapeau franco-ontarien a donc été officiellement hissé pour la première fois le 25 septembre 1975 à l'Université de Sudbury, à une époque bouleversée par de grands changements sociaux et politiques. Partout au pays, les francophones se faisaient entendre. Et en Ontario aussi, les francophones étaient à la recherche de repères leur permettant de forger leur identité. Ce faisant, c'est une page importante de leur mémoire collective qu'ils étaient en train d'écrire.

Les créateurs du drapeau franco-ontarien ont été des artisans de cette révolution tranquille en Ontario. Ils comprirent que l'engagement individuel était fondamental, mais qu'en s'unissant, l'impact en était multiplié. Ils comprirent que le dynamisme d'un groupe était tributaire de sa vigueur identitaire. Ils comprirent que les francophones avaient besoin d'un symbole rassembleur.

Je remercie ces créateurs qui furent bien plus que des pionniers. Ils furent des visionnaires et ils firent bien plus que teindre l'histoire franco-ontarienne de vert et de blanc; il y a 33 ans, ils ont modelé le présent et ont imaginé l'avenir.

Le vert du drapeau représente nos étés, magnifiques étés avec tant à découvrir. Le blanc symbolise nos majestueux hivers. La fleur de lys traduit notre appartenance à la francophonie mondiale. La fleur de trille nous identifie en même temps comme Ontariens et Ontariennes à part entière.

Le drapeau franco-ontarien manifeste la solidarité entre Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes et leur volonté irrévocable d'occuper en Ontario la place qui leur revient dans les secteurs économique, politique, social et culturel.

Nous pouvons tous, avec fierté, apprécier les grandes réalisations des francophones qui ont mené à la reconnaissance du droit aux services en français dans les années 1970. Depuis, les gouvernements ontariens successifs ont permis que le français devienne la langue de la justice, de l'éducation, et qu'il occupe une place prépondérante dans certaines municipalités et dans différents domaines clés, comme la culture et la santé.

Vous savez, la dernière année a été particulièrement riche en réalisations pour les francophones. Notamment, la création du Commissariat aux services en français permet maintenant d'assurer une plus grande responsabilisation des ministères envers les services en français.

Le gouvernement vient tout juste d'adopter une loi historique qui permet à la chaîne éducative TFO d'être entièrement indépendante.

De plus, la toute récente création de 266 nouvelles places de garderie de langue française s'inscrit dans le plan du gouvernement pour accroître l'accès à des services de garde agréés et abordables.

Enfin, la Stratégie-jeunesse de l'Office des affaires francophones en préparation a pour but de mobiliser la jeunesse franco-ontarienne et d'assurer la relève pour la promotion du fait français en Ontario.

Surtout, depuis cette année, les Franco-Ontariens ont à leur disposition un nouveau moyen de manifester leur

identité. En plus du drapeau que nous célébrons aujourd'hui, existent maintenant des plaques d'immatriculation automobile disponibles en français avec le slogan « Tant à découvrir ». Désormais, les Franco-Ontariens peuvent montrer leur appartenance francophone sur la route.

Ce ne sont là que quelques exemples qui illustrent la diversité, l'ampleur et la portée de l'offre des services en français. Au fil du temps, les grands accomplissements de la communauté francophone ont consolidé leur appartenance à la province et, de ce fait, ont renforcé la signification du drapeau franco-ontarien.

Je remercie tous les députés des trois partis pour avoir soutenu l'adoption du drapeau franco-ontarien à titre de symbole officiel de la province en 2001. Ce geste unanime manifeste notre reconnaissance à la participation historique de la population francophone dans l'épanouissement de notre province.

Depuis l'adoption du drapeau franco-ontarien il y a 33 ans, combien d'institutions francophones, d'événements, de spectacles, de résidences et d'individus ont arboré, et arborent toujours, le drapeau franco-ontarien!

Traversant le temps, il vieillit bien. Sa riche symbolique alimente l'avenir, un avenir prometteur, jeune, dynamique et expressif. Le drapeau franco-ontarien est un rappel de ce que sont les francophones. Il les rallie avec la somme de tous leurs efforts et de toutes leurs réalisations. Ce drapeau est notre porte-étendard culturel et il symbolise cette belle langue francophone et notre ouverture sur le monde. Il flotte fièrement et de plus en plus haut. À l'instar d'un grand messenger, il tend la main.

Aujourd'hui, les francophones poursuivent leur route en brandissant leur drapeau en signe de reconnaissance. Ils vous disent merci pour votre intérêt et votre soutien.

Je vous souhaite une très bonne fête du drapeau franco-ontarien.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Merci. Responses?

DRAPEAU FRANCO-ONTARIEN FRANCO-ONTARIAN FLAG

M. Peter Shurman: Je me lève aujourd'hui à l'Assemblée et comme Ontarien et comme Canadien fier de répondre au ministre au sujet de l'emblème ou du drapeau de la communauté francophone de l'Ontario.

À mon avis, le drapeau ontarien est un symbole en commun pour chacun et pour nous tous, pour nous qui avons choisi l'Ontario comme le nôtre. Dans ma propre circonscription nous parlons anglais et nous parlons français et plus de 100 autres langues. Néanmoins, nous sommes tous Ontariens et nous avons un seul drapeau qui est pour le monde.

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We have a single Ontario flag because we are a united Ontario, one people composed of dozens of widely differing cultures. I have spoken in this House previously about the special place in which we hold Franco-Ontarians as one of our founding peoples, and I have

endorsed many services designed specifically for them. I do not see any reason for a special emblem, however, for Franco-Ontarians.

Notre drapeau indique que nous sommes maintenant plus que jamais un peuple très divers mais uni. Notre drapeau crée une fierté spéciale. Un drapeau ou un emblème spécial et différent pour notre communauté francophone est diviseuse. C'est une sorte de barrière entre nos deux cultures fondatrices. À Québec, par exemple, est-ce que les Anglo ont leur propre emblème ou drapeau? Non, tout le monde est fier d'un seul drapeau québécois.

We have been represented by the present Ontario flag for 43 years. The Canadian Red Ensign with the Union Jack in the upper left corner and the armorial bearings of Ontario to the right show the connection between Canada's heritage and Ontario's future. Our future and our past are bound together as a single people with many elements, and Ontarians like it that way. J'y inclus les Ontariens d'origine francophone.

Je voudrais répéter que comme « critique » des Affaires francophones pour notre parti, je suis très fier de notre grande communauté franco-ontarienne, et j'aime montrer mon support aussi souvent que possible dans cette Assemblée ou dans n'importe quel endroit. On n'a pas besoin de conflit ou de division. Un drapeau, un emblème, c'est pour tous.

I'm proud to speak the language and proud to have had a dual-language education, proud to feel comfortable in both English and French communities, and proud to acknowledge, recognize and celebrate our differences, but I will never be party to symbols or actions developed in the name of unity when all they do is really divide.

Au lieu d'essayer de nous diviser dans notre grande communauté d'Ontariens, je demande à notre ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones de faire son emploi, son emploi de servir les gens de l'Ontario, comme elle l'a promis quand elle a été élue.

OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC ATHLETES

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd like to take this opportunity to respond on behalf of the PC caucus to the statement from the Minister of Health Promotion. I would like to start off by congratulating our athletes, their coaches and trainers, their supporters and of course their families, who sacrificed so much on their behalf.

It seems appropriate, in light of this being Legion Week, that the origin of the Paralympic Games began with newly disabled soldiers returning home from the Second World War. In England, Sir Ludwig Guttmann was working on their rehabilitation, and the games of darts, archery ranges and table tennis were just the beginning. As part of his revolutionary rehabilitation tactics, the British neurosurgeon Sir Ludwig Guttmann organized annual Olympic-style events for the disabled, and as a result of his pioneering methods we have a Paralympic team to be proud of.

While Canadians brought home an amazing number of medals, I would like to commend all of our Olympic and Paralympic athletes for their hard work and dedication to their sport. Politicians like to use metaphors and illustrative words like “inspiring,” “moving” and “dedicated,” but our Olympic and Paralympic athletes live by those words. It was once said, “Sports serve society by providing vivid examples of excellence,” and I certainly agree with that sentiment. Our athletes are truly inspiring. They show how hard work, dedication and desire to achieve can move mountains.

On behalf of the PC caucus, I'm very proud to congratulate all of our Canadian athletes but especially those from Ontario. Together we salute the amazing ambassadors for Canada, and we congratulate them for being living and vivid examples of true excellence.

OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC ATHLETES

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm honoured to respond to the minister's statement about our Paralympic and Olympic athletes. As a sports enthusiast and a participant in football, baseball and hockey, I have a very slight idea of the energy and commitment it takes to be a successful athlete. I can't imagine how much extra effort it takes for our Paralympians and their coaches, coaches like Tom Thomson of Hamilton, our judo coach.

At the 2008 Paralympics, Canada's medal standing was 19th of 81 countries. We finished with 50 medals, a fine performance by all our athletes. But a special note must be made of Chantal Petitclerc, one of Canada's most decorated Paralympians. She has brought home a total of 21 medals from five Paralympic Games, including 14 gold medals. Ms. Petitclerc is retiring from competition, and I want to thank her for her years of dedication and her successes and wish her the best in her retirement. I want to express the New Democratic Party's congratulations to all our Paralympians for their hard work and excellent results.

My hometown of Hamilton boasts some interesting Olympic history. William “Bill” Sherring was a marathon runner. Born in Hamilton in 1877, he was one of Canada's earliest gold medalists, winning the 1906 marathon in Athens. Another significant local Olympic athlete was Tom Longboat, who was born in Oshweken, Six Nations Reserve, near Brantford, in 1887. Although he did not win a medal at the London Olympics, he came home and became a force in the running field, winning many marathons and turning his considerable skill to being a dispatch runner in World War I.

At the provincial level, we must do everything we can to ensure that athletes have the support they fully need to grow in their sport. We must start at the very beginning, when young athletes are just realizing the path they will have to take. We must ensure the facilities, the programs and the coaches are financially supported so that our young athletes have everything they need for success. We have a short two years before the winter Olympics in

Vancouver. This government must do everything possible to ensure that our Ontario athletes have the support they need to be successful.

Today, we extend our congratulations to all summer Paralympic and Olympic athletes. Thank you so much for your dedication, your hard work and your excellent performances.

FRANCO-ONTARIAN FLAG DRAPEAU FRANCO-ONTARIEN

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I am pleased to rise on behalf of New Democrats and say a few words on this occasion of Franco-Ontarian flag day and to join Madame Meilleur and others as we celebrate this occasion. Ontario has a rich French-language history. In fact, it has been spoken here by French-speaking Ontarians for 350 years. It is amazing to me how they're able to continue to express themselves in French, able to continue and survive with the French-speaking culture, in light of the incredible influence of English-speaking Canadians. I am proud of that enduring quality that French-speaking Canadians have to be able to express themselves, to be able to continue living French culture.

Je veux dire que le drapeau franco-ontarien manifeste la solidarité des Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes ainsi que leur volonté de jouer un rôle actif et présent dans le déroulement de leur histoire. Je suis très fier de m'associer à la communauté franco-ontarienne, je suis fier de parler la langue française et je suis aussi fier de célébrer le 33^e anniversaire du drapeau franco-ontarien. Merci à vous tous et bonne célébration aujourd'hui.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

NORTHERN YORK REGION POWER CONSERVATION ACT, 2008 LOI DE 2008 SUR L'ÉCONOMIE D'ÉNERGIE DANS LE SECTEUR NORD DE LA RÉGION DE YORK

Mr. Tabuns moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 79, An Act to promote the conservation of power in Northern York Region and the Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury / Projet de loi 79, Loi encourageant l'économie d'énergie dans le secteur nord de la région de York et la ville de Bradford West Gwillimbury.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 97, the member has 10 minutes for his presentation. Mr. Tabuns.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Today I rise to ask every member of this House to support my bill, Bill 79. Today we are joined by residents from northern York region, people who have been organizing, who have been challenging

their local councils, people who have come down because they want a 21st-century power system. They don't want to go with the tired old plans of the Ontario Power Authority. They want clean air in their region.

For this Legislature and for this government, now is the time for decision and now is the time to act. Ontario has to renew its electricity system—we all know that. We have to get coal out of this province. We have to create a hydro system that makes sense in the 21st century.

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Our debate today is not only about the gas-fired power plant in this region, it's about the whole direction that we have to take to build a new energy economy in Ontario. Ontario can continue making decisions comparable to buying thousands of typewriters at a time when, worldwide, businesses were transferring their purchases over to personal computers. That transformed the world of business and industry. Ontario can continue to build huge, inefficient, expensive and polluting central power plants, or Ontario can decide that efficiency, conservation, renewable energy and distributed power are the core of its energy strategy. Those are the choices before this province and before this governing party.

A lot has changed since I first introduced this bill in May of this year. At that time, a gas-fired power plant was proposed for this region to deal with constraints on power transmission. A location had not been finalized. Well, just recently, a site has been proposed, announced in Bradford, to the shock of locals, so there's no longer any need here to speculate about where this plant will land. The plant, at about 350 megawatts, will cost in the range of a quarter billion dollars. We have a new Minister of Energy, who made a speech last week committing Ontario to expanding the role of conservation and renewable power in Ontario's power portfolio. Is he serious in his remarks? We will find out. We have a new head of the Ontario Power Authority who may be more open to actually moving power planning into this century. Is he serious? We'll find out.

What better place to find out than here in northern York region, where the alternatives are entirely clear? What better time to find out than this afternoon, when members will be able to vote for or against a bill that sets power planning in this region in the right direction? My bill puts that question. It is very simple. The bill prohibits the operation and construction of simple-cycle generating stations with an electrical generating capacity of greater than 30 megawatts in this region. The bill also requires the Ontario Power Authority to make every reasonable effort to implement conservation measures in those municipalities in order to reduce electricity consumption to meet the overall peak demand for electricity.

When you provide power for those days and those hours at particular times in the year and you have a quarter-billion-dollar investment sitting idle for 90% of the time, you know that you are spending money on something that is extraordinarily expensive per kilowatt hour. This is a very expensive investment. What it means is that the opportunity for cost-effectiveness, efficiency,

conservation and renewable power is very large. We're not talking about competing with hydro power at 1.5 cents a kilowatt hour; we're talking about power that will cost more in the 10-, 12-, 14-cents-a-kilowatt-hour range.

We've had this debate in the past. In fact, this debate has gone out in the general public. Those who are here from northern York region will remember that in 2005, the Ontario Power Authority made statements about power needs in this region. They consulted with residents, they talked about problems with transmission towers. Residents said what they wanted was heavy investment in efficiency and conservation. So in 2005, the OPA said they saw York region as "a leader, a proving ground for energy efficiency, demand management, an opportunity to prove the effectiveness of a conservation-centred approach." That was then.

I have to say, when you listen to those words, when you read that press release from that time, you think, "Okay, they're talking about using the money that ratepayers and taxpayers are going to pony up to actually build a future." So when the members of the Liberal Party in this House rise to speak, and they will, when they talk about keeping the lights on, which I'm almost sure they will, I will ask them if from the notes they were provided with they can tell us how much the Ontario Power Authority spent on energy efficiency, conservation and demand management in this area. How much to date, to September 25, 2008? I don't want to know about what's coming in the next few years, I don't want to hear what would be a really nice shopping list; I want to know what's been spent up to today.

Three years ago, the OPA said that this region would be a proving ground for their colleagues in the Conservation Bureau. What has been proved? I believe, from looking at the reports that have come out from the OPA, that you've spent very little. You're planning to spend a quarter of a billion dollars on this peaker plant and make minor, almost pixie-dust kinds of investments in green power, clean power and efficiency. That is not using this area as a proving ground. It's hard to call it a leader.

You have a new minister who made statements recently in Niagara Falls about his electrical strategy. I think he should be supporting this bill. He should be using this region to demonstrate that his commitment to renewable power and conservation is not simply empty words, that they reflect a real commitment to take a different path. When he spoke to the Ontario Energy Association, he said that he had been touring around the world, learning from energy efficiency leaders more familiar with cutting-edge technologies, exploring more fully the economic opportunities of the green economy. This much was clear to him, he said: "In 2008, nowhere is leadership and innovation more critical than in Ontario's energy sector." Amen, I say. He went on: "The energy sector is central to our vision for a greener Ontario, one where our environment and our economy work in harmony; where we don't have to choose between our health and our prosperity." So the question I have for the government is whether the minister and his ministry have taken a look at northern York region.

You are in a perfect position to do it right now: to decide to act, to turn past decisions on their heads and invest your money in the things you say you want to invest it in. You have local municipal councils that are ready to work with you, that have seen the disruption that would come from this plant, talked to their citizens and heard their citizens in a large number of public meetings. You have mobilized, active citizens right here who will work with this government if it is willing to actually move on the agenda it says it has.

This minister, the Minister of Energy, George Smitherman, has personally gone around and seen the potential of 21st-century power to transform electricity systems and to transform economies. He has the opportunity to take the OPA's hollow words of 2005 and make them real. He is a new minister. He has a new head of the Ontario Power Authority. He can make a break with the last century and embrace this one.

The residents who are mobilizing across this region and who have come here today have many objections to this plan. Their objections reflect their concerns about health. They know this plant will kick in on the hottest, smoggiest days of the summer. They already deal with smog. You can go to Kingston, you can go north of Kingston, and that smog hits you. They already experience it; they don't want it intensified. They want their local economy boosted—the boost that comes from permanently reducing demand for electricity so that people have more money in their pockets and more money is kept in circulation locally. They've seen what other countries are doing, and they want to see that happen here. In Germany, 200,000 people work in the renewable energy industry. There are people projecting that within a decade, the renewable energy industry in that country will be bigger than their auto industry. That is a goal worth shooting for. That is a goal worth trying to attain.

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The minister, in his speech in Niagara Falls, said, "In terms of our long-term energy plan, we must be absolutely sure we capitalize on every single viable opportunity"—every single viable opportunity—"and technology available in the rapidly developing green energy sector. The rewards for early adapters are clear." So said the minister.

I call on all members of this House to take action to stop a misuse of public funds, an investment in a plant that will drag us off course from building a new energy economy, that will deepen air quality problems in this region, that will undermine opportunity for local economic development.

I call on the members in this House who are members of the Liberal Party to listen to what your minister had to say and take him at his word. Take him at his word and vote in favour of a bill that will redirect electricity investment strategy, that will redirect towards clean power and new economic opportunities.

We spend \$100 million a day on energy in Ontario—\$40 billion a year. We import our natural gas from

Alberta. We export tens of billions of dollars a year out of this province for energy. We have an opportunity to reverse that export of money, keep it here and keep us prosperous. I ask for your support for this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I appreciate the opportunity to rise this afternoon and provide just a few minutes of comment in respect to Bill 79. Let me begin by saying that the elements of the bill that deal with a redoubling of all our efforts in respect to conservation are something that I can support.

I want, though, to acknowledge the member from Markham—I've lost track of the names of the ridings as they keep changing on us—from Oak Ridges–Markham for her question as recently as today to the minister in respect to this matter because she's one who lives in and understands the community, being a representative in a riding that runs from Markham to King City and the swath across there.

York region—the population probably is close to approaching a million, if it's not quite there yet—is a fast, rapidly growing region—if not the fastest-growing, probably one of the two or three fastest-growing regions in total population within the province and the country. It is an area that is going to need to have a reliable source of energy on a go-forward basis.

I come from a community, having served municipally as well as provincially, that understands, by virtue of proximity and the impacts, the need for reliable sources of energy in communities. Because of the existence of a nuclear facility, we hear on a daily basis in my community, and listen to it carefully throughout the province, about the potential for brownouts, about the potential for losses of power. Although the blackout that we had in 2003 was not directly caused by any means by our system, it certainly drove home the need in this province to ensure that we have reliable sources of energy to supply this province on an ongoing basis.

The proposed plant is a result of stakeholder consultations with a multi-pronged approach, including the establishment of a new transformer station to be able to make use of power and disseminate power in an effective fashion, capacitors which allow high power to come down to usable proportions. More importantly, it includes the two parts: the single-cycle peak-performing facility to meet those very high demand times, when they do come along, in the most effective way possible, as well as a continued emphasis on conservation within the region and in co-operation with the province.

York region generally, through PowerStream and their other organizations, have proved themselves to be leaders to date in the conservation initiatives within this province, and one would expect that to continue.

The government has a comprehensive plan for energy, a 20-year plan—not another one-year plan, not a five-year plan, but a province-wide 20-year plan—that focuses on issues such as energy conservation, reliability,

production of power, capacity within the system that we have available to us.

Members of this Legislature have been active individually within their communities encouraging conservation in particular and educating people about their energy systems.

During my first mandate, I had the opportunity to serve on the conservation action team under the leadership of the now Minister of Natural Resources—then the PA and subsequently the Minister of Energy, for a period of time—to help drive that agenda. It's something that can and should continue and is continuing at this point in time.

Although I said at the beginning that I support the intent of the motion as it respects redoubling of conservation measures, I don't support the bill that would stop the building of this particular plant. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: As the representative for the riding of Newmarket–Aurora, I am compelled to express my strong opposition to Bill 79.

I do support the member's intent with regard to his emphasis on conservation and alternative energy sources, as set out in section 3 of the bill. But had the member consulted with me, who represents some 50% of the population of the targeted municipalities referenced in the bill, I would have had some questions for the honourable member.

First, what does the honourable member know about York region's growth plan and the resulting future demands on electricity supply and distribution in the region?

Second, is the member aware that the issue of northern York region's electricity supply has been a matter of extensive debate, and the Northern York Region Working Group identified the construction of a peaking plant as the preferred solution over enhanced transmission?

Third, given that the supply of electricity during high-cost, high-demand periods is northern York region's most urgent need, on what technical advice does the honourable member base the 30-megawatt restriction as set out in section 2 of his proposed bill, and on the basis of what expertise does he presume to prescribe these technical specifications?

Fourth, is the honourable member aware of the minister's order that directs the OPA to in fact proceed with the procurement of 350 megawatts of new gas-fired electricity generation, and has he informed himself of the reasons given by the minister for the size of the plant?

Fifth, why would the honourable member take it upon himself to restrict by legislation the very scope within which highly professional and specialized individuals in the energy sector have been asked to deliver and implement a plan that will ensure a secure and reliable supply of electricity for northern York region?

Finally, I would ask the honourable member: Would he impose similar legislation on his Toronto constitu-

ency, knowing that it would impose unrealistic restrictions on a process intended to secure a reliable supply of electricity and potentially destabilize the local economy and threaten his constituents' quality of life?

I want to address these questions for the purpose of clarifying the issue for Mr. Tabuns and honourable members. Most importantly, I trust that constituents who are following this debate will get a better understanding of the facts as they relate to this issue, and the reason for my opposition to the bill.

Let me clarify, first of all, another bit of misinformation that Mr. Tabuns has given the House today. There is no identification of a site. No such decision has been made. In fact, there are three sites in King that are still in play, one in Aurora and one in East Gwillimbury. I don't know where Mr. Tabuns is getting his information.

In 2005, the Northern York Region Working Group, consisting of representatives from the Ontario Power Authority, municipal officials, local electric utility representatives and concerned citizens, confirmed that there was an urgent need to find both a short- and long-term solution. The working group endorsed the following three-pronged strategy: first, the aggressive promotion of energy conservation and demand management; second, the installation of a new transformer station at Holland Junction; and third, a new gas-fired power plant in northern York region.

I supported the working group's conclusions at the time and, on a number of occasions in this House, encouraged and urged the Minister of Energy to get on with the implementation. I can report today that construction started on the new transformer station at Holland Junction in King this past spring, and that an energy conservation and demand management program is being implemented with some success. In fact, the OPA has contracted for up to 30 megawatts of demand response in northern York region, and a number of conservation programs are being delivered by the local distributors.

I fully support placing more emphasis on conservation and demand management, but it must be recognized that while these measures can reduce the overall demand, they cannot guarantee that adequate supply will be available to meet the reliability criteria. That's why the construction of a new peaking plant is imperative to ensure a reliable and secure source of energy for northern York region.

1400

There's some debate about the reliability of the 3% per annum load growth rate that has been used to determine demand. Whether it's 2% or 3%, the reality is that York region is one of the fastest-growing regions in this country, and we know that we need a reliable supply of electricity. Of significance, however, is the fact that the accuracy of those projections became considerably less important with the Minister of Energy's order of January 31 this year. That order expressly states—and I want to quote for the record: "In addition to relieving local supply inadequacy, it is also expected that the new facility be capable of contributing to the province's overall need for gas-fired peaking capacity...."

Mr. Tabuns knows full well that Ontario will have to refurbish or replace 25,000 megawatts of generating capacity over the next 20 years. That represents more than 80% of Ontario's current capacity of approximately 35,000 megawatts. To say we face a major challenge on the security of energy supply is an understatement, and there is not a community in this province that can afford to ignore it or refuse to be part of the solution. And while the generating facility proposed for northern York region is first and foremost required for our needs, the excess capacity ordered by the minister is necessary to support the broader provincial need for peaking capacity. Not only do I support this plan, I am convinced that my constituents, when they get the full context of the information, will support it as well.

I will once again say what I said to the Minister of Energy in May this year. I support the construction of the peaking plant, but the residents must be consulted and properly informed of the process and the rationale for determining the size, type and location of the plant. That is why I call on the minister yet one more time to reconstitute the working group, include all municipalities in that process, and direct the OPA to ensure that the appropriate information, full disclosure, is given to the people of York region so they can understand it and we can get on with this project in full confidence.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): I would remind members that it is customary to refer to private members by their riding names and not by their given names.

Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm happy, in the few moments that I have, to support my colleague from Toronto-Danforth, support the bill, and support the direction in which this bill is taking us. And I want to refer myself to some of the comments he made about mon ami George Smitherman and, in general, the government, because they often talk about conservation and energy efficiency and make it appear that that is their central focus while moving at the same time in a different direction.

I believe one of the reasons Mr. Smitherman has been put in this position is that he is able to promote that image of a man and a minister who is going to deal with energy efficiency and conservation in a way that perhaps some other ministers have not been able to. George is a very convincing kind of guy, and it's quite possible that a whole lot of people might just believe him more than others, including possibly the leader of the Liberal Party, and that is what I believe the Minister of the Environment is dedicated to.

If you look at the numbers—and I was desperately trying to get the attention of Peter Tabuns while he was listening to the other member, because I read an interesting statistic about how little we spend on conservation versus the Liberal commitment, supported strongly by Conservatives, to move on nuclear power. Liberals—make no mistake about it—are committed to nuclear power in a big way, and they are going to be spending

close to \$40 billion and/or more by the time this is all over. That's the commitment. That's where all of their money—our money, taxpayers' money—is going. That's the direction we're moving in, including gas-powered stations—and big ones, yes, not small ones. That's the direction of the government. We are not spending adequate time and money on energy efficiency and conservation. We're not doing that.

It's good that Mr. Smitherman, the Minister of the Environment, has travelled across the world, and I support that. I like the idea that members travel and learn from those experiences. Because if you go to Germany, you realize—and I'm not the environment critic—that they produce 14,000 megawatts of power from wind alone. We, at peak, use 25,000 megawatts of power, and Germany uses 14,000 megawatts of power from wind alone. So it's good that George, the Minister of the Environment, is able to travel and learn from that experience.

The question is, in reality, in truth and in fact, what money and what attention is he going to devote to the issue of conservation? Because that can only be shown not in words, but in fact. At the moment, the commitment to those things is not very strong, except in language, and as I say, the minister is very good at that. He'll create this image that the Liberals are committed to it and they're moving there in a big way. No, they're moving to nuclear in a big way. That's your commitment: expensive, and potentially dangerous.

People say it's clean. It's clean only if nothing happens, and most governments haven't figured out what to do with the nuclear waste. They have not figured out what to do with that waste. It's stored at the moment. How safe is that, when it's radioactive for 10,000 years? When you look at the incredible, expensive amounts of dollars we put out to create it and the incredible amount of money it takes to revamp those plants and how much that money would do if we were able to talk about energy efficiency and conservation—if you think about it, we could do a lot, but the investments are not there.

So I wanted to simply say those few words in support of my colleague and in support of the direction in which he's moving with this bill. And I wanted to offer him much of my time because I know, in looking at the notes, there is so much to say. So I leave the remaining time to my colleague to finish his comments.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm really very pleased to enter into this debate this afternoon. Like my colleague from Newmarket-Aurora, I represent the citizens of the township of King, at least south of Highway 9. They have been talking to me about this issue for the last several months.

I would like to commend the member for Toronto-Danforth in terms of his commitment to conservation. Clearly our government also shares that commitment, as was so ably expressed by the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure during question period this morning.

I do concur with my colleague from Newmarket-Aurora. Once one understands the full implications of this particular situation in northern York region, one

comes inevitably to the conclusion that in fact the restrictions, as set out in section 2 of Bill 79, are not sustainable.

The township of King, the area that I represent, is predominantly rural. It is a beautiful area of rolling hills where, in fact, the majority of the residents are firmly committed to the greenbelt plan, the Places to Grow Act. Their mayor is also very much in support. They know that their particular corner of York region certainly is not growing to the extent that other areas are. So, as is only human nature, they are questioning very strongly why perhaps their municipality might need to be a host. Those are understandable emotions, and I think my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora has expressed the frustration of individuals in terms of the communication by the Ontario Power Authority to date. There was an excellent relationship with the working group prior to its being disbanded, and subsequent to that, somehow communication has not been as good as it might have been.

1410

I did ask the minister during question period whether such a plant was needed. He categorically said yes; that was today, after his several months of studying a number of issues related to his portfolio. Of course, he emphasized the fact that a reliable supply is job one. Many businesses in my community have emphasized this with me as well. Not only is it the growth across the region of York, it is also the fact that the working group did reject transmission as an alternate solution.

I think most telling is the reliance that we have on this peaker plant in terms of the grid. Currently, northern York region is not meeting the standards of the North American Electric Reliability Council or the Independent Electricity System Operator. This means that our power supply across a far broader area is potentially at risk. So what this peaker plant will do in York region will not only supply the high-growth areas when they need that extra surge of power, but it also will safeguard our entire system through this part of Ontario.

Having looked at this issue with some specificity, I would again like to say to the member for Toronto–Danforth that I think this was an ideal opportunity for us all to examine the issue in more detail, get some answers and be able to explain to our communities with greater clarity the need for this plant.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: Today I would like to speak to this House about the Ontario Liberal government's plan to build a gas-fired power plant in my riding of York–Simcoe. In addressing this issue, I also want to let my constituents know that Bill 79 is not the way to fight the plant. In fact, it would have a very negative effect on our communities.

In January of this year, the Ontario Liberal government ordered the Ontario Power Authority to find a private company to construct a gas-fired power plant in northern York region. We are getting reports that Bradford is now part of this search area. This directive

was issued after a consultation process which time does not allow me to comment on beyond saying that, to say the least, many felt that it did not properly take into account the views of people in northern York region. My colleague Frank Klees, MPP for Newmarket–Aurora, and I wrote to the Minister of Energy asking for a better consultation process. Unfortunately, the government is sticking to its order to build the plant, and I hold out little hope that the government will consult them again.

In May, I asked the Minister of Energy to guarantee that this project would be subject to a full environmental assessment. My constituents want to know and deserve to know why the government thinks the plant is necessary. We must ensure that all possible options are considered before any plant is built in one of our local communities. Of the five municipalities in my riding, four are on the government's list for the plant. No municipality is a willing host, and all my local councils are concerned. I do not argue with the power needs of our communities, but we cannot sacrifice our local environment or put the health of local residents at risk.

Two of the proposed sites are each within a few short miles of the Holland Marsh, a place where farmers grow most of Ontario's vegetables. What effect will a gas-fired plant have on this vital agricultural industry? It is time for the government to start providing answers to my constituents. We deserve a full individual environmental assessment for this project.

Bill 79 is not a responsible way to deal with this issue; in fact, it would create more problems than it solves. Bill 79 would ban a peaker plant in the seven local municipalities, but any new demand for power would have to be matched by a cut in use within these same seven municipalities. This is, frankly, unworkable. This is a threat to jobs and prosperity in a fast-growing area.

The government appears to be indifferent to the environmental and health concerns of my constituents. The NDP would ban the plant, but at the cost of our local economy. Both of these are not answers to the concerns of my constituents.

I will continue to stand up for the communities in York–Simcoe. We must support protecting the environment and creating jobs and prosperity, neither one at the expense of the other.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Further debate? The member for Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I find the comments from the members interesting. I'm not surprised by their comments. What I find extraordinary is a lack of understanding that there are a variety of routes that one can take, a variety of methods one can employ, to provide power. In fact, those jurisdictions that are using those methods are the ones that are moving ahead. Those are the ones that are developing the renewable energy industries of the 21st century. And jurisdictions like ours, which seem to believe that 40-, 50-, 60-year-old technology is the wave of the future, are endangering not only their environment but their long-term manufacturing capability.

So when we talk about this, I want you to recognize that right now, in this city of Toronto, deep lake water

cooling, which is taking cold water from deep in Lake Ontario, is cooling major buildings in this city. You didn't have to build a power plant for cooling; you utilized the resources that were there. In the city of Windsor, they have ice storage underground that cools a million square feet of office space every day. They make the ice overnight; they use the cooling during the day.

There is more than one route to provide people with adequate power. If you continue to follow the route that feeds global warming and undermines public finance, you are making a huge error. What is extraordinary to me is that the Conservative Party in this chamber argues for the most expensive option. I think of them as being financially conservative, interested in cost-effective and low-cost solutions to problems to maximize the economic activity.

Look at the alternatives that you have in York region, that you have in Toronto, that you have across this province. If this government were to invest a quarter billion dollars in that region to make sure that every factory in that region had the most effective, efficient, state-of-the-art electric motors operating on assembly lines, that government would be doing industry a favour. If this government made low-interest loans available to homeowners to install geothermal heat pumps so they could reduce their electricity demand by 50% to 70% for heating and cooling, they would have used those dollars wisely. If this government would take every public building—every city hall, every provincially owned building, every hospital, every school—and retrofit them to bring in the most effective lighting, to dramatically cut the heating and cooling bills, to make sure that hot water was generated by solar power, then that quarter of a billion dollars would be used effectively and it would generate industrial jobs.

Pennsylvania is a state south of this province. It is a rustbelt state. It has had hard times. They're implementing a program of installation of wind turbines. Intelligently, they told wind turbine companies that if they wanted to put wind turbines in that state, they had to build factories to provide the components; 1,400 people work in an industry in that state that doesn't exist in this province. We are caught in an old paradigm, an old way of thinking that says the only way to provide power is to burn something. No, that's not right—95% of what we have to do is burn something, and the rest of the time, we'll sprinkle green dust on it to show that we're actually concerned about the environment and about the future.

1420

We are turning our backs on the industries of the 21st century, and that is a major error. We are continuing to degrade air quality in that region, and that is an error. Every year, thousands of people in this province die from air pollution. We have non-polluting options. We have options that are far less polluting than this peaker plant, and yet the government is not taking that direction, and the official opposition does not support a change in direction. So not only are we driving up our health care costs, we are ignoring the major industrial development of this century.

In the last century, those countries that stuck with coal and slowly went to oil were at a huge disadvantage. Those countries that did not automate, that did not bring on IT, were at a huge disadvantage. I remember in the 1980s talking to people who were trying to decide: "Should we buy new typewriters or should we go to these computers?" Computers are pretty expensive but, boy, they did a whole lot of things that hadn't been done before.

It's a question of what kind of energy strategy, industrial strategy, health strategy, environmental strategy you have, what kind of vision you have for the world ahead. When an opportunity is before you to make a decision as to which direction to go in, that is when you have to say, "We've decided to go with the 21st century. We've decided to make the big change that has to happen. We've decided to follow jurisdictions like Germany, Denmark and Portugal." Quebec is starting down this line of requiring wind turbine manufacturers to build in Quebec, to build their factories and make their products there. If we stick with old technologies, we will have nothing to sell the world, we will have nothing to offer the world. They will be selling us those technologies.

There are days when you know you just don't have the votes, and I can see that. I've brought forward things before and from time to time, whether it was fighting for public health initiatives or environmental initiatives, I've recognized I haven't had the votes. But I've also seen that, years later, very often people have said, "Yes, based on what I understand now, that was the direction to go in."

The citizens who are here today have taken a look at what's coming, in both the short term and the long term, and they've made the right decision politically to fight this plant. I hope I'm wrong, and I hope people will vote for this bill.

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): I remind our guests in the gallery that you are welcome to join us for the debates but not to participate in any manner.

Further debate? The member for Niagara Falls.

Mr. Kim Craitor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be part of today's debate. As you said, I'm the member who represents the riding of Niagara Falls, and we affectionately call it "the home of electricity."

I want to share a couple of things with you. I've heard over and over again that the government has no plan, that we have nothing in place. I will share with the House that before I became a provincial member of Parliament I sat on city council for 10 years. I was there when there were two other governments in power before I was elected as an MPP, so I had a chance to watch their plans, or lack of plans, when it came to electricity.

One of the first things I have to share with the House is that our government immediately took the initiative to look at one of the most valuable resources we have in this province in terms of producing electricity—one of the cheapest ways, one of the most efficient ways, and one of the most renewable ways of producing electricity, and

that is the use of Niagara Falls. That had been on the books for a number of years, but no government took any initiative, and I'm pleased to share with the House that this government almost immediately made the decision to build a second tunnel in Niagara Falls to make use of that water that we have and to produce affordable, clean and cheap—one of the cheapest ways of producing electricity.

I've heard that we have no plan. I've heard that over and over today, and I've heard it outside of this House. I happen to be the parliamentary assistant for the former Minister of Energy and currently am with the present minister. So I just want to quickly share, while I have about two minutes left of my time, some of the things that we have in our plan to go forward for the next 20 years. As I said, under the previous governments, there were no plans. Coal-fired plants continued to pollute. Supply went down while demand went up. Coal emissions were up under both the NDP and the Conservative governments. We've put in place a 20-year plan to keep the lights on and we are investing—I gave you an example in Niagara Falls—in clean, reliable and affordable energy.

The 20-year plan involves aggressive conservation and renewables. The plan is based on five priorities: reduce peak demand through conservation; increase renewable power; phase out coal-fired generations by 2014; maintain—only maintain—our nuclear capacity at 14,000 megawatts; and use natural gas for efficient and effective peak periods, which is what we're talking about today.

We're leading the pack worldwide in getting rid of dirty coal, we're closing our coal plants by the end of 2014 and we have already reduced the use of coal by one third. The previous government left behind 10 wind turbines; we now will have over 300. In my riding, in Ridgeway, there is a company, DMI, that is building wind turbines. That is taking place—very successful. We brought it here. The Minister of Energy made the point of personally coming out and being there when we opened the plant.

We're helping to reduce energy consumption through a range of conservation initiatives. The more we reduce the demand, the less we'll need to spend on increasing supply. For the first time ever, we have a long-term plan incorporating critical roles of conservation. This year, we have well over 26 conservation programs in place.

I'm extremely pleased to say that this government has taken a leadership role far and above any other government and continues to do so in the way of conservation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Just a brief word on a couple of things: first of all, to congratulate my colleagues Mr. Klees and Mrs. Munro, who have a particular interest in the plant that's prospectively being built in that area of York region, but also to mention that my colleague from the third party, Mr. Tabuns, has fixed on a couple of things that mix one thing with another.

I congratulate him on looking at the concepts that he wants to explore, for example, the manufacturer of wind

turbines in Ontario for use by Ontario. That's a good idea. I congratulate him for recognizing a Conservative idea that had to do with water exchange, cold to hot water being brought out of the lakes. Those are good ideas, but they don't have anything much to do with this bill. Let's remember that as we go forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Member for Toronto—Danforth, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thanks to all my colleagues who spoke. I want to say that over a century ago, in Ontario, in Toronto, we relied on coal as a primary mode of power. It was the Homestead Strike in Pennsylvania and the great coal famine at the beginning of the 20th century that led Sir Adam Beck and a variety of industrialists to say, "Do you know what? In this province, we need our own power. We need renewable power that is generated here and we need to take a big technological and financial leap into the future," so that the member from Niagara Falls could today stand up and say, "We have this incredibly cheap power because someone understood that coal power was not the future for this province in those decades and laid the basis for our modern industrial society." They made the right choice. They broke with that tradition.

In fact, what Ontarians and Canadians learned from developing Niagara Falls, they applied to hydro power in a variety of countries around the world. Brascan, Brazilian Traction, Light and Power: Those were Canadians who had learned how to do hydro—and not just the technology, but the financing—who went out into the world, took Canadian expertise and developed new power.

What we're doing today is a disservice to the vision of those of us who, over a century ago, understood that we had to reshape our energy infrastructure. When I talk about building wind turbines, when I talk about deep lake water, I'm talking about the whole range of renewable energy technologies that we can utilize, the broader range that I've set out. But if we stay stuck in the mud with old technology, then we're cooked.

1430

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Ms. Laurie Scott: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario and the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, should immediately make the necessary regulatory changes to accommodate the construction and manufacturing trades so that the ratio of journeyman tradespeople to apprentices be 1 to 1.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Ms. Scott has moved private member's resolution number 25. Pursuant to standing order 97, member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, you have 12 minutes for your presentation.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I thank you for the opportunity to speak to the motion before us today, and I would like to welcome the many would-be apprentices from various trades and their employers who are supportive of this

motion and have come down into the gallery today. I welcome them to the Legislature.

Ontario's unfair apprenticeship ratios, which are generally at three journeymen to one apprenticeship, have put Ontario at the back of the pack in Canada. I've been encouraged by the positive responses from the various sectors who have helped to lead the charge for fairness on this matter. We're all very well aware of the numerous challenges facing the economy, which include the serious loss of manufacturing jobs along with the small and medium-sized businesses in this province that are closing down. I just want to say that small businesses in this province account for 98% of all Ontario businesses.

This is a motion about people. It's about young people, it's about skilled workers, it's about our economy, and it's about our future. The apprentices have been told there are well-paying jobs available. They've invested time, money and resources. But the folks in the gallery today know this because they've experienced it: They can't get access to those jobs because of the Liberal government's ratio of three journeymen to one apprenticeship. Along with this, the Liberals are punishing the employers who are willing to train and provide the job opportunities.

Our caucus has continued to press for consideration on a number of tangible things that the government could do in order to help deal with these tough economic challenges. This includes bringing forward the sensible apprenticeship ratios in a proper skills training strategy. The hardworking business owners and operators should be given the tools so they can focus on what they do best, and that's providing jobs.

In Ontario, a company in the electrical trade, plumbing trade or sheet metal trade is required to have three journeymen for every apprentice. So a company employing electricians, for example, must hire three full-time electricians for every apprentice they wish to take on. This is far in excess of what is required in other provinces where they focused on creating real opportunity at a 1-to-1 ratio. In responding to my question this morning in the Legislature, the Minister of Training, Colleges and University said that large businesses are subject to the 3-to-1 ratio but small businesses are only subject to a 1-to-1 ratio. The problem with that inaccurate spin by the minister is the minute a business grows and needs more staff, they can't hire an apprentice without first hiring three more journeymen. The reality is, Minister Milloy is penalizing a business for growing. Why on earth would the Minister of Small Business not stand up and tell the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities how unfair and unrealistic this is?

The Premier and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities are constantly talking about the number of apprenticeship students at various colleges. What they won't address is the fact that many of these young people aren't able to find a place to get their experience. Colleges in Ontario are well-positioned to get people ready for the trade work that they are choosing to do. The fact of the matter is that the minister refuses to address the

bottleneck that's caused by outdated ratios. These young, eager, educated people need the hands-on experience, the training with the licensed tradesperson, to complete that apprenticeship.

In the gallery today, we have a number of those eager committed young apprentices from the electrical and plumbing trades, and they can't find work because they're victims of the Dalton McGuinty restrictive trade ratios. I would like to tell these people this afternoon what the minister himself said in Ontario's Workforce Shortage Coalition report: "One thing I can tell you about our future direction is that it will focus very much on the individual—and removing obstacles that stand between them and obtaining the skills they need to get meaningful employment."

That sounds profound and moving, but the folks in the gallery are here today because the major barrier that keeps them from finding meaningful employment is the restrictive and outdated ratio. Other provinces and jurisdictions have seen the importance of less restrictive ratios.

The minister and the Premier have tried to use the issue of safety as a smokescreen. That's not what this is about, unless they're both accusing the Liberal Premiers in BC and New Brunswick of not caring about the safety of their workers. Also on the issue of safety, young people in the Ontario youth apprenticeship program are not subject to ratios when they are in high school. But once they graduate from high school, they're subject to these ratios and can't find spots. Again, they're unable to complete their apprenticeship program.

We've heard the minister and the Premier, and no doubt we'll hear Liberal members today, refer to the Armstrong report, commissioned by the minister with respect to apprentices. For one thing, as usual, we're waiting for the McGuinty Liberals to respond to the report—good luck on that one, for those waiting for it. But I will tell you this, which comes directly from Mr. Armstrong himself: Factors related to ratios aren't part of what the minister asked Mr. Armstrong to report on. How convenient is that? So Mr. Milloy is actually hiding behind a report, which the taxpayers all paid for, that doesn't even have the mandate to consider these important factors.

I want to give you some recent examples. A poll taken by the Daily Commercial News asked the question, "Should the journeyman/apprentice ratios be changed to allow more apprentices to be trained?" The results were not even close: 94% in favour of changing the ratios.

Mr. William Bell, who operates Bill Bell Plumbing in Brighton—

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Hear, hear! In Oxford.

Ms. Laurie Scott: In the riding of Oxford—my colleague beside me. He has been unable to employ these students because of the restrictions placed on the apprenticeship program in Ontario. "I find the ratios ridiculous," he says. Mr. Bell also points out that there is a shortage of journeymen as well. The only way for him to get more staff is to hire an apprentice, and unless the ratios are changed, he can't.

In my own riding, there are many examples. In Minden, I have a second-generation family in the electrical business, operated by Steve Stewart, who says, "We have wanted this change for years. It's time."

Another comment from Dial One Wolfedale Electric—they've brought some folks here in the gallery today for us: "The sooner we get this situation resolved, the faster we can start training our new young workforce.... We will hire 10-15 new apprentices right away." Ten to 15 new apprentices are in the gallery today that they could hire right away. The problem is that the minister doesn't want to provide that opportunity.

The Open Shop Contractors Association: "The current apprenticeship ratio of three to one is too restrictive and unfair to future construction employees. It is great to put money into training, but if the apprentice can't find a job to work in their chosen trade, the funds have been wasted."

I want to quote my colleague Mr. Leal, from Peterborough, in the Peterborough Examiner from July 3 this year. He says, "I see a real advantage to getting to the 1-to-1 ratio that will allow many more apprentices." He goes on to say, "It's really disconcerting when they graduate and find out they can't start the official apprenticeship program because of the ratios." I'd like to thank the member from Peterborough, and look forward to him being consistent in his position and rising to support this motion today, because I believe he is a fair and reasonable MPP.

Another member of the Legislature, the member from Northumberland-Quinte West, also supports ratio changes. I quote from a June 2 letter: "Your colleague, then Minister of Energy, the Honourable Dwight Duncan, in his address clearly indicated that a change must be made to these ratios. This is a matter that very seriously needs addressing." I say to that member: I hope you're consistent and that we'll see you support this motion today; you've already done so in writing. We'll be watching all the Liberal members and how they vote on this.

Minister Dwight Duncan also supports this. Let me quote from a publication called Dialogue from the summer of 2007. "During the question period an OEL"—Ontario Electrical League—"member asked Mr. Duncan: 'Will you help convince the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to change the ratios to allow the hiring of more apprentices?' Mr. Duncan's response was a firm 'yes.' The OEL and its member deeply appreciated the minister's support." I also appreciate Mr. Duncan's support, and I will be keeping a close eye on how he votes on this matter.

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We will make sure to let the public know as well whether the Liberals support this motion, believe in fairness and opportunities for our young Ontarians, or if the Liberals feel they owe some sort of obligation to the unions who provided them so much campaign funding and want to keep the ratios high.

I also want to bring up a past member of the Legislature. Mr. Alvin Curling, when he was Minister of Skills

Development in 1989, recognized the increasing demand in the construction and electrical trades and the need to consider the impact of the ratios.

This motion is also strongly supported by a number of major organizations in Ontario who represent the worker apprentice aspect as well as the business operator side of the coin: The Canadian Federation of Independent Business did a report, Apprenticeship Training: Lessons Not Learned, and released another report today, How Many is too Many?; the Ontario Electrical League; President John Tibbets of Conestoga College, who works directly with so many young apprentices; and I want to quote the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, from a recent resolution, "The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the government of Ontario to realign ratios in restricted trades to allow for 1-to-1 ratios between apprenticeships and journeypersons."

I have a quote from the home builders' association: "To be committed to providing apprenticeship opportunities to train the future generation of renovators, contractors and tradespeople needed to support the industry, however, the current apprenticeship system does not provide the flexibility they need to fully incorporate apprenticeship opportunities in their small business models."

There is no doubt that in this province we are facing a severe and critical labour shortage, often referred to as "crippling" in the media articles as early as yesterday. I've heard too often the story of a young person giving all they have to their education only to find out that they're being held back by ratios that put Ontario in the back of the pack in Canada. What choice do these young people have? They can go to BC, Alberta or Manitoba. Ontario loses them; we lose them. It's time to give their dream a chance.

They can do what many people here in the gallery are doing. They're not letting Dalton McGuinty's policies force them to give up. They're down here. They're actively supporting the change that we're proposing today. They're not letting the non-active Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities away with hiding behind his reports that he really does nothing with.

Mr. Speaker, I know I'm running out of time. I look forward to hearing the debates and comments from other members. I'm hoping that they're prepared to support these young people, to fight for the changes to these outdated ratios, to have the courage to say so and tell the young people across Ontario that you believe in them and what they can offer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): I'll again remind members that you should refer to another member by his or her riding and not by his or her name.

Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I rise not in support of this bill but to oppose it, and I'll do my best to give a rationale.

I understand why the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock is presenting this bill and obviously believes that by dealing with the ratio somehow we solve the apprenticeship problem. I want in my best

way to present an argument against that, because I believe that is a fallacious argument. I do not believe that that is the way to solve the shortage of apprentices in the province.

There's a lot we need to do; there's no doubt about it. I think all governments have done this job poorly. Yes, the government has increased apprenticeship programs in the last couple of years, to give them a little credit in that regard, but there's so much more that we could do better.

I believe that countries like Germany are examples of what we should be doing around apprenticeship programs. We should be sending people like George Smitherman across the world to learn about what other countries are doing and how to solve some of our problems in this specific regard. I have to tell you that one of the better ways to solve this problem is to get employers, unions and governments together to talk about how to deal with the shortages of skilled labour.

I'm telling you, the ratio's not the problem, in my humble submission, as lawyers would say.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: But it is the problem.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I don't believe it to be the problem. It's presented as if that is the only problem that exists. I don't believe for a moment that that is even a significant big part, or a small big part, of the solution. It is not at all.

I know that we have to help small businesses; that is for sure. There are small businesses that simply can't do this very well without adequate support. There's no doubt that we've got to deal with that. But I look to places like Quebec.

We don't have to travel far. All we have to do is go to Quebec, most of the time, and pick up some good ideas, rather than travel to Germany and such places. In Quebec they impose a 1% fee on corporations to invest in apprenticeship programs. If they do not, we take some of their money and make sure that money then gets invested in apprenticeship programs. That's one of the ways that we make it possible and certain that money gets invested, because at the moment a lot of corporations spend money to train, and those workers get stolen by other corporations that don't invest. Something is wrong with that kind of system, where some invest, others do not, and those who invest end up losing their workers to corporations that do not put money into apprenticeship programs.

That is a serious, serious problem we face throughout all our provinces in our Canadian system. We should be talking about that. How do we help to deal with that problem? We can't help unless we get the three players—government, employers and unions—together to solve that particular problem. We can't deal with this problem unless we force corporations to invest in apprenticeship programs, because I'm telling you, we invest so very little. This is an opportunity for ministers to travel a little bit. I'm saying, don't go to Germany; go to Quebec as a small, little start and see what you can pick up. It doesn't cost as much, and you can go by train to Quebec—environmentally more friendly than going by car or plane.

These are some of the serious questions that I believe governments need to look at.

Look at some of the comments by T.E. Armstrong Consulting. Mr. Armstrong did a report for the minister on a compulsory certification project in April 2008. He was a prominent labour arbitrator, formerly the chair of the labour relations board, deputy minister of labour and deputy minister of economic development and trade, among other appointments. That's a report we should all be reading. I haven't had a chance to look at that report; I only have snippets of some of the comments he made. But he reminds us that the rationale for a ratio policy, which was set out in the Dymond report in 1973, was for the following purpose: to prevent employers from using apprentices primarily as a source of cheap labour. That was the point of having a ratio, and that was built into what we did in 1973. I remind us of that because it's as relevant today as it was then.

There are a whole lot of people who don't mind using cheap labour, a whole lot of employers who don't mind using cheap labour as helpers, as unauthorized licensees, in order to, yes, make some money out of them. But many of those workers do not end up completing the program. Many of them stay for a little bit and then move on to start another apprenticeship program with other people who move on, but many do not complete their apprenticeship programs. That ought to be a concern to some people.

You want to be certain that when they apprentice, they complete the program and at the end of it are certified, and you as an employer or as homeowners who hire these people know you're getting the best workers that you can, who are trained and have been trained for all the requirements necessary. But many of you know that some of these folks use cheap labour, and they're really helpers under the guise of apprentices, and under the guise of getting money from governments because they're apprentices. We should be looking at that, and we should be listening to Mr. Armstrong when he proposes—let me read to you what he suggests: "In my recommendations, I have proposed the establishment of a college of trades, one of whose functions would be to augment the existing practice by establishing a standing independent advisory panel to comment on ratios not only in light of demands/supply forecasting but also having regard to the need to ensure that training standards are met and that ratios are not being abused by employers to employ cheap labour. It is recommended that the panel should include one or more prominent labour market economists with expertise in workplace forecasting."

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We should be listening to people like him. We shouldn't hastily move to adopt a motion presented by the member of Haliburton-Kawartha as a potential saviour of our apprenticeship programs, because that's not the problem. So when the member says, "Ah, the problem is that the ratio is 3 to 1," we know that in some industries that is not the case. When you look at a report

prepared by a friendly member whom we know as John Grimshaw, the business manager, financial secretary, for IBEW union Local 105—he reminds us that the number of journeypersons in his field to the number of apprentices allowed with the total workforce creates a different kind of ratio, and it's not always 3 to 1, that in some cases, depending on the workforce, it's 1 to 1, in some other cases it's 2 to 1, and, yes, in some cases it's 3 to 1. But if you listen to the member from Haliburton-Kawartha—and there's another part connected to that riding—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Brock.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: —Brock, you would think that the ratio is always 3 to 1. It is not the case. So it suggests something that is in fact not true.

We need to look at why this system of ratios was put into effect and how we keep the integrity of apprenticeship training: Does it potentially weaken the health and safety performance of the workforce, and does it subvert in some ways the goals of the apprenticeship tax credit introduced by this government? These are the elements that need to be looked at, as we review this particular bill.

I remind you, as well, that in the construction trades we know that it is a cyclical kind of pattern where you have growth, and all of a sudden you have less growth. Therefore, the demands on that sector vary from time to time. So you cannot prepare a report or introduce a bill based on an economy that's growing this way versus what we have now in reality, and that's a slowing economy. So the ratios are going to change, the workforce is going to change, and the demands are going to change. In fact, this friend of ours, Mr. Grimshaw, suggests that if you look at his sector, the electrical trades, in terms of the people who complete the apprenticeship program, it's 870, or at least it was in 2005. In 2005, 870 people completed the apprenticeship program. When you look at the Construction Sector Council analysis of requirements for the construction electricians, the annual apprentice completions in 2007 to 2016 required to maintain the current balance is 675. They are already getting, as of 2005, 870 apprentices, meaning they are already training above what is required to fill the demand in this sector. It is true that it may not be the case in all sectors, but in this sector they're training more than they actually need.

You've got to look at this system in a much more comprehensive way. You have to listen to Mr. Armstrong, who proposes that the Ontario College of Teachers look at this in a rational way with people who have a lot of expertise to be able to advise governments about how to do this best.

The ratios work. That is not the problem. We should be looking at many other problems that we have vis-à-vis apprenticeship, but this is the weakest link, in my view, on how we reform apprenticeships and how we can do a better job in this regard.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Further debate.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It's my pleasure today to join in this discussion on apprenticeship ratios. I thought

it might be helpful to just start with some definitions to give us all some common ground, not only those of us here in the chamber, but those watching at home.

I wanted to start out by saying that as an educator I have seen first-hand the difference that this has made to the lives of our youth and to adults who are retraining. I'm just going to give you the definition straight up: An apprenticeship is an on-the-job training program for people who want to work in a skilled trade, learning from certified journeypersons. An apprentice is an individual currently training under a registered training agreement or a contract of apprenticeship. A journeyperson is an individual certified to practise in a particular trade who has completed all of the requirements and has acquired the certificate of qualification or certificate of apprenticeship. Apprenticeship ratios establish the number of certified journeypersons an employer must have for every apprentice it wants to train. Originally—and this is an interesting point that we should all acknowledge—ratios were established for reasons of safety, quality workmanship and effective training. About safety, there is absolutely no way we can rush a process with such significant impact.

With respect to the motion under consideration today, it's important to note that the provincial advisory and industry committees, comprised of employees and employers, regularly review ratios established for each of their trades. The advisory committees provide advice to the government about various aspects of their trade, including ratios. It's not the role of politicians to make decisions on industry-specific matters like ratios.

I have many construction companies in my riding of Kitchener-Conestoga as well as in all three of my townships of Woolwich, Wilmot, and Wellesley. I have come across various opinions and ideas from my constituents, who share a vast array of opinions. I met a student recently, one of my students—I was his vice-principal. He went through school for business co-op. He did construction co-op. He then went on to apprentice and is now working in the industry. He shared with me very keen insights on this issue. I mean, this is his business, this is his livelihood. He went through the process and he works in the industry. It illustrates why this needs to be with the industry and why on September 16 Minister Milloy announced the government's intent to create the new Ontario College of Trades, a professional body that would put skilled trades on a similar footing with teachers, doctors and nurses. This is the result of sound advice that we received.

I wanted to clarify. Last year the government asked Tim Armstrong, an industry expert, to examine a number of aspects of the apprenticeship system. Mr. Armstrong delivered his report to Minister Milloy on April 28 of this year, and it's posted on the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities website. The Armstrong report provides a number of recommendations on how to make our apprenticeship system even better, and it does mention the issue of apprenticeship ratios. One key recommendation of Mr. Armstrong's report was the

creation of a new Ontario College of Trades, and as I said, Minister Milloy announced the government's intent to create this.

I wanted to follow up on the same train of thought as my colleague from Trinity-Spadina when he mentioned John Grimshaw, the president of the IBEW, who today is quoted as saying, "The decision to establish a college of trades is a good decision and one we support. By having Kevin Whitaker, chair of the Ontario Labour Relations Board, as implementation adviser, we have someone who has the knowledge and expertise to deal with this file. Any decisions on ratios must be based on good public policy and not on politics."

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm very pleased to join in the debate today on the resolution put forward by the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock to do with changing the apprenticeship ratio from what we have in Ontario—three journeymen to one apprentice—which is very different from most of the country—one to one—which would provide much more opportunity for apprentices to have places to be able to learn a skilled trade.

We have a great skills shortage in this province and it's getting worse, so this is a simple change that really doesn't cost the province much at all and it provides a great opportunity for more young people to develop a trade.

We had an economic summit run by the PC Party here at Queen's Park just two weeks ago. I was sitting at our table, where there was an electrical contractor, and he told me about how, in his business, they hire community college students. They'll have them working for them one day, and when they go to start their apprenticeship the next day, they can no longer work for them. That's the crazy situation we have.

We have small businesses—the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses points out that 98% of all businesses are small businesses, and 43% of qualified labour shortages in Ontario are in jobs that require apprenticeship training or a college education. So there's obviously a great need.

I think of a small business from when I used to be in the resort business. Our plumber, Ron Mann, was a one-person business; basically, he did work on his own. Well, how the heck does he get somebody to succeed him if he needs three plumbers to train one to succeed him? That's ridiculous, and that's the situation we have in Ontario. The government says it's because they're getting advice from their provincial apprenticeship committees etc. In my opinion, those are just union-controlled committees that are looking after their own interests.

From my perspective as the aboriginal affairs critic, I was meeting with a councillor for Shawanaga First Nation, in the riding in Parry Sound-Muskoka. In chatting with the councillor, I said, "Well, what are your kids doing?" His son wants to be an electrician. There's

only one problem: He can't find any business to sponsor him. Why not? Because of this rule that we have here in the province of Ontario.

So the question is, why would we not change that rule? As I was suggesting, it's because this is a union-influenced government. There are union-controlled committees that are making the decision recommendations to the minister. "And why is that?" you might ask. If you look back to the 2003 election, there was an organization called the Working Families group, which funded a lot of third party advertising. There was that nice campaign, "Not this time, Ernie, not this time," that was very effective. In fact, our leader has written to the elections commissioner to ask about whether that in fact should be allowed under our elections laws.

That advertisement was very effective. It was financed mainly by unions under the cover of this Working Families group, and now the big payoff comes after the election: The government has brought in rules like Bill 144, where we've gone back to the archaic, card-based system for signing up new members to unions. I've just met with some construction companies in my riding that are being scammed into forming a union, based on that legislation. It's creating a lot of problems out there.

That's why we aren't having a very simple change to this rule that we have in the province of Ontario, fairly unique in Canada, that would provide so much more opportunity for our young people, including First Nations, and all across the country would help solve the skilled labour situation we have in this province.

If you look at the chart for the country, in British Columbia there are no ratios whatsoever. The great majority of the provinces have one to one. That makes all the sense in the world. That's what we should be doing in this province to provide opportunity for our young people.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My colleague from Trinity-Spadina set out a very cogent argument to oppose this motion. If we're going to have safety on the job site, if we're going to have proper training, we need to maintain the current ratio. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Very succinct. Further debate?

Mr. Reza Moridi: As a former educator, let me begin by saying that I am very, very proud of our government's record on apprenticeship. The McGuinty government has done far more than any government in the history of this province to support apprenticeship and to strengthen the apprenticeship system.

We are the first government to make apprenticeship a priority. In the last four years, 50,000 new apprentices have registered in Ontario's training system. That's an increase of 25% and we're on track to create the number of registered apprentices by another 25%.

To compare our record to that of our predecessors on the Conservative side of the House, the McGuinty government has basically doubled the investments and

doubled the number of apprentices. Our government knows there is more work to do and we are committed to taking the steps necessary to build a strong and competitive skilled trades sector. That's why we had Tim Armstrong, a highly respected labour expert, take a look at the skilled trades industry earlier this year and tell us how to improve it.

We have heard a lot of discussion today about apprenticeship ratios, specifically about the ratio for electricians. First, I want to make sure this House has its facts straight. Roughly 60% of Ontario's electrical businesses are governed by a ratio of 1 to 1. The majority of electric companies are small businesses and the current ratio structure recognizes that fact. It's only when you get into bigger companies that the ratio increases, first to 2 to 1 for mid-sized companies, and then to 3 to 1 for large firms. So it's a bit misleading to say the electrical ratio is 3 to 1.

What's important to keep in mind when we are talking about apprenticeship ratios, and what Mr. Armstrong clearly tells us in his report, is that ratio is just one area of the skilled trades sector that needs to be modernized. Mr. Armstrong tells us about apprenticeship completion rates, attracting youth to the trade, up-to-date training. These are equally important matters that need to be addressed in order to continue to build a strong skilled trades sector that can contribute meaningfully to Ontario's economy. That is exactly what we are doing.

Last week the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, the Honourable John Milloy, announced the government's intent to create a new college of trades. Legislation will be introduced in the spring, and if the legislation is passed, the government will create an arm's-length oversight body that will deal with issues like the ones I've just mentioned. Over the summer alone, we created about 4,500 new apprenticeship spaces with that investment.

The Premier, the minister and this government will continue to work hard to build a strong, modern skilled trades system that works for industry, that works for apprentices and that will help move Ontario's economy forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm very pleased to rise today in support of Ms. Scott's private member's resolution. I think it's far overdue and it's about time the House started to listen to this.

The other day—I think I was yesterday—the Premier stood up and talked about fairness, fairness about how we're being treated by the federal government year after year. This is about fairness as well. It's not about the quality of workmanship or about safety. It's about fairness for our young people in the province of Ontario.

Why should a construction apprentice in Mississauga be treated any differently than one in Vancouver or Montreal or Moncton? Why are we different? The rest of the country has a 1-to-1 ratio. This isn't rocket science. This is an agenda that the government does not want to

cave in on. That's why the college of trades was created all of a sudden. It's nothing more than a delay tactic. It's another level of bureaucracy. Who is going to sit on the college of trades? We know that it will be slanted in favour of what the government wants, which is the support of the construction trade unions—not the construction workers, the construction trade unions. Quite frankly, I'm disgusted that I hear members of the government stand up here and actually oppose Ms. Scott's resolution. The reality is, it's about fairness to young people in the province of Ontario. They deserve the same rights to apprenticeship training as any other young men or women across our country.

I can tell you of many examples of people who just could not get on as apprentices. Where are they today? They're in Alberta or Vancouver. They're in these provinces, getting their trades out there. Why should that happen? I hear these excuses, "Well, it's all about safety." Are you telling us, then, that all the other apprentices in the other provinces are working in unsafe positions? I don't think that's the case at all. We have the Ministry of Labour and they have safe working conditions. It should not apply for one second to our skilled trades people and particularly to apprentices.

1510

I'm disappointed that it's taken this long to get to the floor. This can be corrected with just a regulatory change. Put it out for some comment if you have to, but the minister can change this like that. It doesn't have to go on year after year, bringing in legislation on a college of trades. That's garbage and hogwash, as far as I'm concerned.

Let's start supporting these people who are in the audience today. Let's start supporting all of our construction and trade unions. We need these people. In the construction industry and the manufacturing industry the average age is increasing every year. We're not getting enough young people into these trades and we need to make sure we get more, plain and simple, or, as we try to build this strong economy and we try to build this strong country and province, we're not going to have the construction people here. We'll have to bring them in from Vancouver or Alberta; bring them in from other countries, because we will not have them right here in this province.

So I urge everybody in this House to support this resolution. I think it's a positive thing. When I see the construction unions putting out negative press releases against Ms. Scott, I can tell you right now we're on the right track; she's on the right track. Congratulations on a job well done. I can tell you that I fully support what she's doing, and we will continue this fight.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Further debate?

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I'm pleased to stand and speak on the resolution posed by the member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. I wish I had more time. This is clearly a very serious issue.

The resolution we have before us here today is because the construction and manufacturing sector want

us to consider and change regulations in advance of the work being done by Kevin Whitaker.

They aren't the only group that want special consideration. Another group that approached Tim Armstrong some months ago was the Sprinkler Fitters of Ontario. They worked with the sprinkler and fire protection industries and came forward, after working with their provincial advisory committee, and asked for compulsory certification status. Everybody, I think, in this House knows how I feel about residential sprinklers. So I support the work that they do.

I understand that it's important to accept the work that Kevin Whitaker has been given the responsibility to undertake. It's clear that ratios and compulsory certification are issues that require serious and thoughtful attention. Frankly, I think it's really important not to circumvent the work of Mr. Whitaker. It's a very slippery slope when politicians make decisions about industry-specific matters like ratios without consultation with all the affected stakeholders.

When the Sprinkler Fitters approached Tim Armstrong, they stated in a letter that, "Taking a national perspective, the Ontario sprinkler industry and the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities have been leaders with regard to the apprenticeship program. This includes the development of the national occupational analysis, training, standards, common core curriculum and inter-provincial (red seal) examination. In light of other provinces recently expanding compulsory status to this industry, doing so in Ontario would truly enhance worker mobility while ensuring a qualified labour pool."

I certainly support the work and the advocacy of the Sprinkler Fitters of Ontario. I think that having a trained and qualified individual installing sprinklers is only right, because they provide safety in our homes. But today I'm here to speak about this particular motion. I have confidence that the work being carried out by Mr. Whitaker will serve as a really sound basis and a core for how we make apprenticeship and skills training a priority in this province.

Mr. Armstrong concluded in his report, "There is substantial potential to improve" It's important that we give the time necessary to "enhance the standing and effectiveness of the apprenticeable trades and their continued, strengthened contribution to the growth of the Ontario economy."

It's really hard to wait when we know that there is the ability to improve our apprenticeships and we know there are young people out there who want to get on with the task. We're going to have to be patient a little longer, I think. The report and all the thoughtful recommendations that we've received are in Mr. Whitaker's hands. I have confidence that once he's had an ability to consult with all the stakeholders, he's going to bring forward some recommendations and suggestions that we will undertake to bring forward, because apprenticeships are really the backbone of Ontario and are going to bring prosperity and safety to our construction and building trades.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to stand and fully support my colleague from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock in her motion today in support of our youth and our apprentices. I also want to welcome the many apprentices and electricians, members of the Ontario Electrical League in the audience today.

I have a little bit of a different perspective on this, I guess, from others. I've heard many members read political spin, and I've seen them read from news clippings and magazines. My perspective is a little bit different, for it's first-hand. I have completed my electrical apprenticeship. I did complete my electrical licence, and I was an electrical contractor. Contrary to the other statements, it is indeed factual that small and medium businesses in the electrical trade, and others, are required to work with this imposed 3-to-1 ratio—contrary to those other statements.

I'm not going to get into all the details and all the exceptions and exclusions, but it is indeed a fact. But as the colleague from Trinity-Spadina mentioned, when this ratio was first introduced, it was introduced not as a safety measure but as a measure to limit supply of skilled labour. That's what its intention was and that is, indeed, what the intention remains today. It has nothing to do with safety. It's to limit supply of skilled workers.

When I was in the trade, this ratio was never a problem. It didn't cause anybody any concern. Nobody paid any attention to it because we didn't have any enforcement officers to enforce the ratio, up until a few years ago. A few years ago, we hired jobs protection officers in this province. I think we now have about 200 of them who can go in and inspect people's licences, inspect the number of apprentices and journeymen on every work site, and that is where the problem is coming.

I'll just refer to one. A gentleman I know in my area hires many electricians and apprentices. In the last 10 months he has been visited three times on his jobs by jobs protection officers. They have come into his job sites—taken all their people off work, made them produce their identification, resulting in unproductive time for these people. Why did these jobs protection officers come on? Because of an anonymous phone call, often by union representatives, trying to limit competition. Here, three times they've had these jobs protection officers on enforcing apprenticeship ratios. Never once did they find a problem with this fellow, but they continue to go in and disrupt his job sites.

Let me just read a little bit. This contractor then had to convince his customers that he wasn't doing anything wrong. This elevated concerns, raised concerns. A customer said, "I'm not sure that we should be using your company any more." Once again, I found myself in a terrible position," the contractor said, "defending my company's reputation without having committed any offence whatsoever."

This motion must go through—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Thank you. Member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, you have two minutes to reply.

1520

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd like to thank my colleagues who spoke today in the Legislature. I especially want to thank my colleague from Simcoe North, who originated the resolution, the motion we have here today. He has been a very strong advocate for apprenticeship, the ratio change, and I really appreciate his support in speaking to this.

It's not a partisan issue coming from us. The journey-men tradespeople to apprenticeship ratio of 3 to 1 is outdated. It's unfair for small and medium-sized business. It's time to move forward. It's time to help our young people in Ontario looking to apply and to get their ticket for a skilled trade.

The minister and the Premier are hiding behind reports. They're hiding behind the Armstrong report which says, "The 'public interest' does not appear to be one of the criteria for the committees' recommendations made to the ministry." And there is another from the Ontario Home Builders' Association in response to these PACs, the provincial advisory committees, that says, "As an industry, we do not believe the PACs have served to reflect the nature of employment and apprenticeship opportunities created by the residential construction industry." This is huge when the minister's own PACs are seen as a barrier to progress in the trades.

It's time that the Liberal government listened. The industry is screaming to change these outdated ratios. The folks up in the gallery are the future of the industries. They've made it clear to the Premier and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to stop ignoring them.

The Liberals across the way are holding back on the livelihood of these young, skilled workers because of their inaction on tackling the unfair ratios. The minister has the ability, with the stroke of a pen, to change the ratios today, and I encourage him to do that.

TOWING INDUSTRY ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR L'INDUSTRIE DU REMORQUAGE

Mr. Zimmer moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 87, An Act to regulate the motor vehicle towing industry in Ontario / Projet de loi 87, Loi réglementant l'industrie du remorquage de véhicules automobiles en Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Pursuant to standing order 97, the member for Willowdale has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. David Zimmer: I'm very proud to have brought this private member's bill forward. What I propose to do is to speak for a couple of minutes on the purpose, why I brought the bill forward; a couple of minutes outlining

the structure of the bill, how the bill will operate legislatively; and thirdly, a few comments on the support that this bill has developed throughout the province.

First of all, why have I brought this private member's bill forward? In my constituency, my discussions with constituents, my discussions with friends, my discussions with colleagues and over the years my discussions with members of this Legislature, I have heard innumerable personal stories about what happens when they have towing experience. I have heard many, many stories. I dare say, each member here has probably had their own towing experience. If you haven't had your own towing experience, you've heard about it from friends and colleagues.

What has happened is that that towing experience, be it as a result of a collision, a broken-down vehicle, your car is towed away for a parking violation or whatever, when that tow truck arrives and takes your vehicle away, you have a very, very good chance of having a good experience with a responsible tower. You get a fair tow for a fair price, and the experience, while nobody wants to get towed, is not an unpleasant experience.

On the other hand, you've got an equal chance when that tow arrives that it turns into a nightmare experience. I just ask all my colleagues in the House to reflect on that and think about some of the horror stories that you have heard about a bad towing experience, either your own, your friend's, your colleague's or your constituent's. We've heard stories about excessive charges, cars ending up in pounds, excessive charges in the pounds and nasty experiences with the tower. We've heard estimates of people paying anywhere from \$50 or \$100 for a tow to \$600, \$700, \$800. I have documented pieces in my office from reputable sources of bills exceeding \$1,500, \$1,600, \$1,800—in some cases over \$2,000.

As I say, if you have a good experience with a tow, you'll get a competent operator, a trained operator, a fair operator. But then again, you might have the nightmare experience. This legislation is designed to eliminate that nightmare experience, to bring some order to the process so that when members of the public have a towing experience, they can take comfort that they're going to get a fair price for a competent tow and reasonable storage charges. This, in effect, is a piece of consumer protection legislation.

I have heard, as I've said, from individuals; I've heard from the insurance industry. The insurance industry is a big player in this piece of legislation because, more often than not, the costs of the towing experience get charged back to the insurance company. When that's all added up throughout the province, that in turn reflects negatively on your insurance rates; it drives the price of insurance up. I've heard from the Ontario Provincial Police and other police forces about the difficulties they have in managing, supervising and regulating the towing industry. Essentially, it comes back to this point: There are no common standards, there is no common fee structure and there is no common expectation of what a good towing experience might entail. This legislation is designed to deal with that.

Let me speak just for a couple of minutes on outlining how the legislation works. First of all, it's self-regulation. We're asking the towing industry to regulate itself. How are we going to do that? What the act contemplates is the Towing Industry Council of Ontario. Everybody who's in the tow truck business and has a tow truck has to register with the council. There will be a licensing regime in place. The council itself will have a board of directors of up to 20 people. Forty per cent, or about four members of that board of directors, will be members of the public who have no connection whatsoever with the towing industry and who will be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council to in effect represent the public interest, to represent the consumer. The other 16 appointees on the board of directors will be from the towing industry, broadly speaking: There will be representatives from the independent towers, the sole operators; there will be representatives from the larger and mid-sized towing companies; there will be representatives from the insurance industry; there will be representatives perhaps from law enforcement, to bring their views to bear; there may be representatives from some municipalities to bring their points of view.

That towing council plus the board of directors will be charged with the responsibility of coming up with a regime which will contemplate essentially four things: how a licensing regime should work, how a complaints process regime should work, how a discipline process regime should work, and how a standards regime should work: What should be the standards, what should a consumer reasonably be able to expect to have a good towing experience?

That council and board of directors from the towing industry, broadly speaking, together with the four members representing the public interest, will present to the government, the Minister of Consumer Affairs, probably, a recommendation on how that regime should work, that is, the discipline, the complaints, the licensing and the standards: What are the standards of a good towing experience? The government will look at that recommendation and ensure that those regulations are passed and take effect. That's the broad outline of how the bill will operate. The council and the board of directors will set registration fees and the like. There will be rules on how they can discipline a member or take a licence away and so on.

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Now let me just say a couple of words about the support that the bill has developed since it was introduced at first reading in June. Earlier this afternoon, at 1 o'clock, in the media studio downstairs, I had a press conference. I was joined at the table by the deputy superintendent of traffic services for the OPP. I was also joined by the vice-president, Ontario, Insurance Bureau of Canada; and the executive director of the Ontario Recovery Group and the Provincial Towing Association of Ontario. I made essentially the same remarks that I have made thus far in his chamber. The OPP spoke, the Insurance Bureau of Canada spoke and the Provincial Towing Association

executive director spoke. They all—to a person—endorsed the legislation.

Let me just tell you what some of them have said. This is a quote from Mr. Don Forgeron, the vice-president, Ontario, Insurance Bureau of Canada, that this bill "will protect Ontarians from unreasonable costs and practices of vehicle towing and storage operations. This legislation is a huge first step in protecting consumers through higher standards and reasonable pricing."

This is what Mr. Doug Nelson, who is the chief executive officer of the Ontario Recovery Group and the Provincial Towing Association of Ontario, said: "This legislation will eliminate barriers imposed by costly municipal licences. It will also promote a higher standard of training, and provide better monitoring of prices charged to customers." Mr. Nelson also went on to say, "This bill will be of huge benefit to the general public. It will ensure a higher industry standard of employee training and conduct, improve overall customer service and eliminate price gouging. In addition, it gives our industry an opportunity to become more involved in highway traffic incident management"—that's the accident where the highways are blocked and the tow trucks are swirling around, all trying to get a piece of the business—"and work towards improving highway safety and resolving gridlock issues facing Ontario motorists."

The deputy superintendent from the OPP made similar remarks endorsing the bill.

Let me say something about the licensing regime, because right now what the bill contemplates is that everybody will have to join the Ontario towing council and get a licence and be registered and subject to the rules and standards and disciplinary procedures and so on. Right now in Ontario, some municipalities issue a licence and some municipalities don't. Tow truck operators often find themselves in a situation where they've got to have multiple licences, or no licences. None of those licensing regimes have standards or an oversight or a disciplinary procedure. It's merely, if you pay the fee, you get a licence and you can have a tow truck and operate in that jurisdiction. This bill is not about generating fees for the province. It's not about taking away fees from those municipalities that do have licensing regimes. This bill is about consumer protection. Again, think of your own experience. Think of your friends' experiences. Think of the stories that you've heard. That's why this bill has tremendous support throughout the province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm very pleased to rise today to support Bill 87, An Act to regulate the motor vehicle towing industry in Ontario.

I'll start out by saying I know this bill originated with a connection to my riding, and that is that Doug Nelson, who is currently serving as the executive director of the Ontario Recovery Group and the Provincial Towing Association, is actually from my hometown of Bracebridge. Doug was involved in his own towing business

for many years—a lot of experience in the towing business. This is an issue that he's been working on for many years, so I'm pleased that this private member's bill has come to the Legislature. I know that behind the scenes Doug and his association have spent a lot of time and effort working toward this day.

Why do we need this legislation? Why we need it is because there are a lot of problems out there, particularly on our major highways—on Highway 400, on Highway 401—and I think consumer satisfaction and the industry's reputation are at an all-time low. We have problems with chasers, exorbitant bills, vehicles going into body shops where they are basically held captive and are not released until significant bills are paid. I have a copy of one here. The bill for all of a seven-kilometre tow, a bit of storage and a bit of teardown is \$2,925, and that's before any actual work is done. That's one example, but not an isolated case. So there are problems out there that need to be dealt with.

There are problems in the insurance industry. I note the Insurance Bureau of Canada says, "Every day hundreds of Ontarians are at the mercy of the 'first-come, first-serve' tow truck operator who shows up at the scene of a vehicle accident waiting to make his next dollar.... They often take advantage of the situation by taking custody of an automobile and using that custody as leverage to increase costs, accumulate exorbitant storage fees and attempt to influence the choice of repair service."

Actually, just as I was stepping outside of the chamber, my brother happened to call me. Larry happens to own a body shop and a Ford dealership. I said, "I've got to go. I'm speaking on a towing bill," and his only comment to me was, "Well, you've got to do something about the exorbitant storage charges that occur." I'm sure he's had first-hand experience with it through his involvement in the business.

We have real problems with gridlock on our major highways, and this bill can help come up with some of the solutions, some incident management to help clean up the effects of an accident more quickly. There are all kinds of benefits to that happening in terms of the time police officers spend, and of course the huge economic cost to a highway being closed.

So I think this proposal to self-regulate and to bring some standards in makes a lot of sense. They're going to create a multi-tier licensing system for the towing industry through this bill that would implement a classification/certification system for the tow trucks, for the tow truck drivers, for the tow truck companies. The objective, of course, is to regain public and private confidence in the towing and recovery industry.

Some of the benefits that we'll see from this legislation being brought into effect: for the towing industry, fewer complaints and issues, improved industry reputation, improved public image, improved morale among employees, making the business more attractive to hire more people; for the Ministry of Transportation, quicker clearance and reduction of gridlock issues, reduction of many service complaints; for the police, a drastic re-

duction in operating costs, and of course communication would improve with the towing industry; for the insurance industry, we'd see an end to the insurance price abuse issues, we'd have complaints to a complaint review board, and we'd have a drastic reduction in operating costs; and most importantly, for the public we'd have improved industry service through a qualification and licensing process, we'd end the price abuse issues, and we'd have complaints going through a complaint review board.

So I think there are many benefits to come from this. If this bill passes today, I hope it would be referred to a committee for further improvement; it might not have all the answers. I know my colleague the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington is going to get up and probably question the way this bill is solving some problems and representing some of the independent towing operators. But I think even the independent towing operators recognize that there are some problems out there.

I hope this bill passes today. I hope it then goes to a committee where the public and all those involved who have a stake, including the police, the government, the Ministry of Transportation and cities, will have an effect. I think that we should be doing away with all this municipal licensing that's a patchwork quilt across the province and putting in this type of regulation, which is going to have some real improvement to the conditions under which our towing operators do business, for all the benefits that I've outlined.

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I will be supporting this bill when, I hope, it comes to a vote after this hour of debate.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I have a few things to say. I know the member from Niagara Centre wants to contribute to this debate, so I'm going to leave some time for the members, including, maybe, for the member for Toronto-Danforth. I'm not quite sure, but we'll see how it unfolds.

New Democrats support measures that provide added protections for consumers using tow truck services, and it's for that reason that we generally support the direction of this bill proposed by the member from Willowdale. Except, there are some concerns, and I want to speak to them.

There are times when, yes, many people self-regulate, such as nurses, doctors, lawyers, teachers and others. We allow that; we think it's good. And then there are times when we face problems, such as the explosion in north Toronto just about a month and a half ago or so, where we know the Technical Standards and Safety Authority failed us in so many ways. Only after the explosion did that so-called safety authority begin to crack down on its members. So we support self-regulation because it's better than no regulation, but there are instances where self-regulation in and of itself could be a problemo. And I'm thinking of the financial services in the US, where

the subprime problemo in the US—and you think, my God, who's minding our finances over there?

Who is worried about how we regulate those markets? When everyone says that the markets are king, the markets can do no wrong, the markets can make no mistakes, and all of a sudden, we are facing one of the worst financial disasters we have ever seen, and Mr. Bush and buddies are there to bail them out. People who make loads of money by barrels, day in and day out, who failed those individuals who invest their few dollars, and then we have a disaster of this sort—you have to ask yourself: Who is regulating those people? Who is regulating the markets?

Sometimes, I argue, self-regulation is not that great, that somebody should be supervising those who are hired to supervise on a voluntary basis. I wonder whether this is one instance where we might agree with the CAA that perhaps the government should regulate and have a superintendent who keeps an eye on the whole tow truck industry. But it's a good question that is raised by the CAA.

It is also important for me, if I were to support self-regulation as proposed by the member from Willowdale, that the towing industry council must be represented—at least 60% of it—by consumers. You cannot have an association that's represented largely by the tow truck operators. It just cannot be. Yes, they should be represented, but it cannot be the majority; the majority must be consumers. This way, I know that I, as a consumer, am going to be protected. At the very least, if we're going to support this bill as it goes into committee, unless we change those numbers such that consumers are over-represented rather than the tow truck operators, then I don't know if I can support this bill.

I'm quite interested in debating the bill, quite interested in making sure it goes to committee and, yes, interested in listening to consumer groups out there. We don't have a strong consumer protection authority in this country; we just don't. I wish we did, and I wish it could be financed in a way that we could have a consumer authority that actually protects us from everyone, including, sometimes, governments. That would be good by me. But we don't have such a strong authority, such a strong consumer protection agency in this country that's well-financed, that is able to hire people—lawyers and others—to dig out problems and lobby to solve them with governments and with industry. We don't have that, and it's most unfortunate.

In instances of this sort, I really do believe we need greater protection of consumers, for consumers, on this board. So that, at the very least, is a change that I recommend. But it's an important initiative, because at the moment there are no protections. The industry has been able to do whatever it has wanted, governments have done nada, and there is nobody regulating them—not themselves and not the government. So this is a good initiative by the member from Willowdale. I'm assuming that many of the members are going to support the direction of the bill, but I am hoping that they will listen

to folks like me who are proposing some suggestions to make it stronger. If you're not going to have the government regulate them, directly connected to the minister—the Minister of Transportation in this case—then I think you've got to make this bill much stronger.

I know it's going to get to committee—I have no doubt about this—because I've got a feeling that a lot of Liberal backbenchers are going to support it. It's just a feeling I've got.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Prescient.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Prescient, omnipotent, omniscient. Prescient would be better, because omnipotent is too strong.

As it goes into committee, I am looking forward to the debate, I'm looking forward to some of the groups coming before to us comment on it, including tow truck industry folk coming to give their comment on this. It's quite possible that they themselves want to regulate the industry because it doesn't, quite frankly, have a great name for itself—it doesn't. So I'm assuming they too are very eager to say, "We've got to get this under control. We've got to regulate it in a way that gives us some credibility." So they themselves might want to come and give their views, and I'm looking forward to hearing them as well.

Madam Speaker, that's all for my contribution. I'm looking forward to the member from Niagara Centre making his.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: Yes, the member from Trinity-Spadina mentioned that this certainly is a very important consumer issue. I concur with him and I certainly applaud the member from Willowdale for bringing this bill forward, because this is really about helping people who are sometimes in a very traumatic state when an accident occurs. You can imagine the nervousness that exists when you're in a horrible accident, and then you're trying to make decisions, and it's very difficult.

As you know, usually the first people who arrive at an accident scene are the tow truck operators. That's one of the good things they do. I know there are a lot of stories about misbehaviour amongst tow truck operators, but certainly they do help people out of very difficult situations, many times even before the police come, so we must put that on the record too.

I was a bit involved with the industry when I was dealing with the auto insurance reform from a few years ago. I became somewhat familiar with some of the challenges. As you know, a lot of people put the cost of the rogue operators out there out of mind, because the cost is really borne by a third party through insurance rates. So people say, "What do I care who the tow truck company is bringing my car to? The insurance company is paying. So what if it costs me another \$2,000? Big deal. I'm not paying for it." But, as you know, eventually it all comes out of our pockets in higher insurance rates. Certainly the insurance company certainly doesn't pick up the cost; the consumer does.

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As you know, what happens quite regularly is that you'll have one of these rogue tow truck operators sweet-talk some person who is in a traumatic situation, pick up a car and hold that car hostage. Then you go to your local auto repair shop and say, "By the way, here's where my car was taken by this company." When they try to get your car back, they say, "They want another 1,000 bucks before we can get your car out of storage somewhere, out of hostage, and bring it to your local body shop."

That type of action does occur, and that gives all tow truck operators a bad name. That's the type of thing that I think would be helped by this bill. In essence, the consumer has no idea who the rogue operators are and who the established ones are. They all look the same. They're big, huge trucks that come out of nowhere—they're there faster than you can say Jack Robinson—but you don't know who you're dealing with, whether they're good, reputable operators or not.

By having some kind of self-regulation, you're giving the consumer some idea of who the reputable ones are; there are some mechanisms where they can improve their best practices, ensure that there are some safeguards for the consumer and that the good, honest tow truck operators are able to be identified and dominate the industry, and not the rogue operators who just look upon this as a fast buck and take advantage of people when they're most vulnerable.

It's a complex issue. That's why I think this will take a lot of discussion and a lot of input from all the stakeholders. You're dealing with municipal inter-boundary complications—as you know, Hamilton has a different system than Peel region and Toronto; there are different standards and different practices. The police are also a critical component of this, because they are on the scene. There is all kinds of input that should come from the insurance industry. In many cases, the auto repair industry is very closely allied with the tow truck industry.

I think it is sometimes a neglected part of consumer protection because, as I said, usually people think, "Well, the insurance company is paying." But basically, as I've said before, we are all paying if we let rogue operators take advantage of a system which, in many ways, doesn't work too badly considering it's really a free-for-all. It's like George W's Wall Street right now: everybody for himself.

Mr. Peter Kormos: It's called capitalism.

Mr. Mike Colle: Yes, pure, unfettered capitalism at its best.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Unbridled capitalism.

Mr. Mike Colle: Unbridled capitalism.

If we can get the member from Willowdale to bridle this a bit, I think the industry and all the good operators—as I said, the majority are good operators—will be able to provide good service for the consumer. I think it's something that will help a lot of people who, as I said, find themselves in a very traumatic situation on the highway, sometimes at night by themselves, who have never even opened the hood of their car since they've had

it. I know the member from Hamilton says she has never lifted the hood of her car in all the time she has driven. That's not unusual these days; it's not like the old days.

But we have to take a serious look at this, and I hope everybody will support this good piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I will be opposing this bill for a number of reasons, and I'd like to speak to those reasons today. I guess the first thing I should say is that I'm glad I don't live down in Toronto, because of all these horror stories and nightmares of tow truck operators. I will tell you that I believe I know every tow truck operator in the county of Lanark and I get along really well with them and so does everybody else. They're fine, upstanding, respected members of the community, and they don't cause anybody nightmares. I'm really glad I drive up in Lanark and Frontenac counties and not in Willowdale or Trinity-Spadina.

There are a few things; the next one is the support. This bill does have support of those who will benefit from it, those who will receive a privilege from it. It is not supported, of course, by those who will carry the burden of it. Today, in the members' gallery, we have members from the Ontario Federation of Independent Towers, who do not support this bill. There are other groups out there that do not support this bill in its present form and actually have quite differing views on how the towing industry can be improved, such as trade certification instead of this regulatory bill.

There are those that do support it, though. One of them is the insurance bureau. I wonder if the insurance bureau would like it if the tow truck operator sat in judgement on their fees and could rule on their fees that they were allowed to put on tow truck operators. We're getting into a bit of a conflict here when we have those who will benefit imposing those burdens on others.

It's just not, as a few others members here call it, unfettered capitalism. Capitalism is a good thing. It allows us to be here today. But when we start having consumer groups or interest groups determining what the fee schedules are going to be for somebody else, that is really a corruption of what legislation is about. It would be like Colonel Sanders telling the chicken farmers what they must sell their chickens for. It's just not right.

But also going back, I'm hearing all this hearsay. There may be a problem in parts of this province; I don't deny it. But it is not everywhere. This bill, however, will be applied everywhere. Those jurisdictions and those areas where things are functioning well will face the same imposition. Just think for a minute. The tow truck business in Trinity-Spadina may have a business volume this high, and up in Carleton Place or Perth, their business volume is going to be this low, but they are going to pay the same provincial fees. What's going to happen to those guys up in rural Ontario when they have to pay these high provincial fees? They're going to be out of business. When people from Toronto want to go up to the hunting camp or the fishing camp and get pulled out off

the gravel road, guess what, guys? There will be no tow trucks, because they can't afford the fees of this bill.

We have to think a little bit more before we bring legislation in. We have to think of the consequences of that legislation. We can't just believe that striking some legislation will create utopia. I've also heard that this bill will give us consistency: consistent standards, consistent fees and consistent everything. I'd like to remind everybody here, I believe it was Oscar Wilde who said consistency is, of course, the last refuge for ignorance. We don't need everything to be consistent in this world.

Anyway, there are things that can be done. I would like this House to consider those positions of other interested stakeholders and parties like the federation of independent towers who want to see some trade certification to elevate the standards in their business and in their industry and not just have their competitors or interest groups sit in judgement of them with this regulation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I was eager to speak to this bill. Its author is a prolific drafter of legislation. He's been stiffed more than once by the Premier's office.

Interjection.

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Mr. Peter Kormos: Well, he has—most unfairly. Most recently, you'll recall he introduced a very popular bill that regulated roadside zoos, the private zoos. He was exploited; he was propped up during the election campaign, used last October by his Premier's office—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Well, he was—to campaign with the Liberals, because it was very popular legislation, and then he got stiffed. The bill disappeared and it was nowhere to be seen in the new animal welfare legislation.

Look, I am a fan of this member and I want to see this bill go to committee. I say to the Premier's office, you've bullied Mr. Zimmer enough. He's not going to take it anymore; his colleagues aren't going to take it anymore. If Mr. McGuinty wants to promote a backbench revolution, he can take on Mr. Zimmer on this one. I caution him not to.

Let's talk about tow truck operators. These are some of the hardest-working women and men in our communities—they are. It's dangerous work. They're out there on busy highways extracting cars from entanglements, from ditches, working along the roadside. They're out there at 3 in the morning on blizzard, cold winter days, rescuing people who have slid off the road and have gone into ditches. I have a great deal of regard for their tremendous hard work, and they are very much the chivalrous cruisers of the highways. These are the guys and gals who will phone in an incident to the OPP or to the police when they see something untoward. They're a special breed of people.

Down where I come from, a family like the James brothers for decades were operating tow services. And Mr. Hillier is right: Small towns do it far differently.

They probably do it far better. But what we've got to understand is that there are some issues here of public safety. We look at the circumstance of a person out in the dark, early hours of the morning, alone with a disabled vehicle or with a vehicle that's got a dead battery or that's been in a small fender-bender. That person is very vulnerable. We want to make sure that the tow truck operator who attends to his or her vehicle scene can be trusted not to exploit the vulnerability of that person, even in terms of their own physical safety.

We've heard—and they could well be apocryphal stories—and the newspapers have carried stories about, from time to time, organized crime infiltrating parts of the tow truck industry. I think the legitimate tow truck industry has an interest in preventing that from happening. There are some obvious motives: accessing VIN numbers, amongst other things. I say to people, if you really want to protect yourself against rip-offs, you do what we do down in Welland. You get your cars repaired at a unionized shop like David Chev-Olds; unionized mechanics, no rip-offs. Or you find somebody like young Jimmy Dolan on Bargar Street, Jimmy D's Automotive Repair. "Good work at working man's prices": That's his slogan. A class-A auto mechanic, young Jimmy Dolan, Jimmy D's on Bargar Street. You're not going to get ripped off.

I think this bill should go to committee. I think this bill should be supported in principle. I think Mr. Hillier should take an active role in that committee, articulating the interests of the small-town operators he speaks for out in eastern Ontario, but I think that Mr. Zimmer should be given the opportunity to flesh this out. I think it's in the interest of public safety, it's in the interest of consumer protection. Mr. Marchese talks about the inappropriateness of having an overwhelming number of industry participants. He also talks about the failure of the TSSA. The public safety risks that it has created are as much the failure of the TSSA as they are the result of an incompetent boob of a minister who showed no interest whatsoever in what the TSSA in fact wasn't doing in terms of inspecting, regulating and performing its role.

I support the legislation; I support it in principle. I look forward to it being refined, I look forward to public hearings and I look forward to Mr. Zimmer getting the credit he deserves from this Premier.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: In looking at the bill from the member for Willowdale, I am reminded of some of my experiences with a former neighbour I had on my street a few houses ago. He was a tow truck driver. He and his wife were regular folks. I met a lot of the guys who do pretty much the same job, and we'd sit down and they'd start chatting after a drink or so. That's when it would come out who the bad actors were in that industry and when all the bad practices within that industry came out. Like everybody else, they liked to complain about what they didn't like in the thing that they did. In recalling some of those discussions and looking at the bill brought

forth by the member for Willowdale, this is a bill that's about time.

I can recall one of the neighbours on the street that I live on now talking about being in a very, very minor bumper thumper—no significant damage to either of the cars. While the two people were exchanging licences, in the description I got, he said that at least three tow trucks had converged within moments. They were putting a fair amount of pressure on both drivers to winch them up and tow them, and both drivers told the tow truck drivers, "Thanks, but no thanks. We don't need it. We're quite capable of driving these two vehicles off to the shop to get repaired."

So what this points to is that there really are few, if any, standards. There are no procedures worthy of mention, no effective means of redress for consumers. The member for Willowdale brings forward a bill whose time has come. I have to note that the member for Willowdale is the same member whose persistence and diligence regulated private zoos and also served to protect animals. He's turning his very formidable legal training and expertise to protecting motorists and to making an entire industry not only better, but more competitive.

How better? For the first time a bill, if passed, would implement a registration committee, a complaints committee and a discipline committee, so finally we'd be able to know who is and who isn't in the industry. There would be, as the member has pointed out, no more multiple licences. I live in a jurisdiction, Peel region, where both the region of Peel and the city of Mississauga license tow trucks. The city of Mississauga is entirely contained within the region of Peel. I'm not sure if the city of Brampton also has an overlapping licence, but it strikes me at the very least as duplicative to have both the region and one of the cities contained in it effectively license the same thing.

The measures proposed by the member for Willowdale also have one thing that's very important: teeth. The member is proposing a \$15,000 maximum fine for a first offence. It's enough to give the bad operators cause to stop and think and say, "Should I do this or should I not?" For subsequent offences, fines can range as high as \$30,000 under the measures proposed by the member for Willowdale.

I'd just like to go down some of the very reasonable, common sense regulations proposed in the bill. The member proposes actually defining towing services. So what is and what is not a towing service? Where can you or can you not legally jack up a car and haul it away? The member proposes measures respecting eligibility for registration. In other words, what is a tow truck? How do you go about registering it? What determines who is or isn't in the industry, and therefore who can and can't provide the services?

He talks about different classes of registration and imposing terms and conditions and limitations on any particular class, so that if you're engaged in one particular class, whether it is, for example, towing a heavier vehicle with a much larger tow truck—does that allow

you to attend or preclude you from attending at the scene of a minor motor vehicle accident to haul away somebody's car? Without getting into the details, this is one of the common sense things that the member for Willowdale would propose that we resolve so both those who operate tow trucks and consumers would be better protected.

One of the things I like that the member is proposing is prescribing circumstances in which a person is not eligible to be registered. In other words, if you've proven that you can't respect the laws and regulations proposed in the act, if passed, the member says you will never be able to be registered. I think, personally, that that's something that should give many operators pause for thought.

1610

The member has had an awful lot of reaction on this, and most of it has been positive. In fact, the overwhelming majority is positive. He has a very long list of tow truck operators here who have supported him. Let me quote by reading just one endorsement from the Associated Canadian Car Rental Operators that says that they "appreciate Mr. Zimmer's efforts in supporting this important legislation." This bill "is a significant step forward in protecting all Ontarians from the predatory practices of some vehicle towing and storage operators. We strongly support" the bill "and request that you too support its passing into law."

I couldn't say it any better. That's why I'll vote for it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Further debate? The member from Willowdale, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. David Zimmer: I thank my colleagues from all sides of the Legislature for their remarks and their support, and indeed, the member from Lanark for his constructive criticism.

Fundamentally, this bill is about consumer protection. This bill is good for the consumer, but it's also good for the towers themselves, because, it takes the reputable towers, the competent towers, the capable towers, and puts them in positions on the towing council and on the board of directors so that those responsible, hard-working, honest, reliable towers can give the government the best advice on how to self-regulate their industry.

The governing regime that's contemplated is a very simple regime. It's efficient; it cuts right to the quick. It essentially provides three things. It provides a method of licensing towers. The second thing—it goes on—is that it then will provide standards: work standards, towing standards. Thirdly, it'll provide a disciplined regime so that those independent, honest, hard-working towers can, if necessary, weed out a rogue tower who's not up to standard.

In my submission, this legislation is good for the consumer; it's good for the hard-working, reliable, honest towers; it's good for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

NORTHERN YORK REGION POWER
CONSERVATION ACT, 2008
LOI DE 2008 SUR L'ÉCONOMIE
D'ÉNERGIE DANS LE SECTEUR NORD
DE LA RÉGION DE YORK

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Mr. Tabuns has moved second reading of Bill 79. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it. Motion lost.

Second reading negated.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Ms. Scott has moved private members' notice of motion number 45. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

We'll do that one more time. Is that possible?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it. We'll deal with this vote at the end.

TOWING INDUSTRY ACT, 2008
LOI DE 2008 SUR L'INDUSTRIE
DU REMORQUAGE

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Mr. Zimmer has moved second reading of Bill 87. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): The bill is ordered to the committee of the whole House.

Mr. David Zimmer: The Standing Committee on General Government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): It has been referred to the general government committee. Is that agreed? Carried.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1615 to 1620.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Ms. Scott has moved private member's notice of motion 5. All those in favour will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Chudleigh, Ted
Dunlop, Garfield
Hardeman, Ernie
Hillier, Randy

Hudak, Tim
Klees, Frank
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia

Scott, Laurie
Shurman, Peter
Witmer, Elizabeth

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): All those opposed will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Best, Margaret
Brotten, Laurel C.
Cansfield, Donna H.
Colle, Mike
Delaney, Bob
Dickson, Joe
Fonseca, Peter

Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kular, Kuldip
Kwinter, Monte
Levac, Dave
Mangat, Amrit
Marchese, Rosario
McNeely, Phil
Moridi, Reza
Phillips, Gerry

Qaadri, Shafiq
Sergio, Mario
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 11; the nays are 28.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL
FISCAL POLICIES
POLITIQUES FISCALES
FÉDÉRALES-PROVINCIALES

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 24, 2008, on the motion relating to calling upon all federal party leaders and Ontario candidates in the upcoming federal election to outline their plan to ensure fair treatment for Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Further debate?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I am honoured to speak on this motion calling on fair treatment of Ontario by the federal government.

Our economy is being challenged by a slowing US economy, the high Canadian dollar, and high oil prices as well. It's also the major challenges that the US economy is facing in terms of the financial sector and also the housing sector. Our government has worked hard to bring in various initiatives to promote and create the right environment for the economy, like cutting taxes, the business taxes, and we are also focusing on the green economy. We have also invested in infrastructure like never before in Ontario. We also have introduced some retraining programs.

But we could do more. That's why we are calling on fairness for Ontario to help our families and businesses get through these challenging times and help us to overcome them and emerge stronger.

Ontario residents send more money to the federal government in personal income taxes, corporate income taxes and sales taxes than they receive back. That is about \$20 billion, according to various estimates of economists. What that really says is that we have about \$20 billion of Ontario taxes that pay for services in other provinces. This is actually our money that could be spent in our province to provide better services, or for that matter, to cut some of the business taxes so that our businesses can become more competitive. What we are really looking for is to keep more of our own money so we can invest in things that can make Ontario a stronger province and a stronger economy going forward.

Over the last 50 years, Ontarians have sent over \$100 billion to other parts of Canada through what we call equalization payments at the federal level. Because of the growing wealth of some other provinces, Ontario may soon qualify for equalization. What we are really saying, and what the Premier made a case for yesterday, is that we need to keep some of that money right in our own province so we can provide some of those services to our own residents.

I want to talk a little bit about what happened in Peel region the other day. The Peel region councillors actually called all the federal candidates that are running right now from various parties, and they basically talked about some of the issues the region of Peel is facing. In Peel alone, we have about 27,000 new immigrants that settle every year. That creates a demand for new infrastructure in Peel: a demand for housing, a demand for long-term health care. The region also needs money to invest in regional roads and the maintenance and operation of those roads.

In addition to that, we also need money for waste management in the region. Peel is the home of 1.2 million people, but they're estimating they need billions of dollars in terms of infrastructure needs. Their estimate is about \$122 billion over the next decade. Our government can't really meet these kinds of demands unless we can keep a lot more money right here in Ontario and provide this to some of the municipalities to meet some of their needs.

Among the issues that our Premier raised yesterday was, for example, that unemployed Ontarians get about \$4,600 less than in most of the other provinces. Why do people who are unemployed in Ontario get \$4,600 less a year than in any other province? In our health care system alone, we get about \$700 million less a year from Canada health transfer payments. We have to ask ourselves, why are laid-off workers in Ontario entitled to less money than in other provinces? That is really not fair. These are just a few ways in which Ontario is not getting fair treatment from the federal government.

The other provinces that are getting money that comes from Ontario are spending on services at a higher rate than we are in Ontario. You can talk about spending on higher education. Some of these provinces are actually spending more money on higher education than we do in Ontario. That is being done with money that is being

transferred from Ontario to other provinces. Is that fair? Absolutely not. I think our students are entitled to the same kind of treatment as students in other provinces.

In Peel, the politicians are asking that Ottawa give an additional 1% for every dollar collected in federal taxes to municipalities. If that happens, then they can meet some of the needs they have in Peel region, like social housing needs, long-term-care needs and maintenance of regional roads. This would help them meet some of their needs. These are important services at the local level that all residents need, because the population constantly keeps increasing year after year.

1630

As Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services, I'm proud of many other programs that we have introduced and funded for small businesses. But small businesses at this point are facing a lot of challenges and they need a lot of help. What we really need to do is make sure that, of the money we are sending to Ottawa, we can keep some here. It's not that we are asking them for any extra monies. We are asking to retain some of our own money so that we can meet some of these challenges as we move forward.

That's what this fairness motion is all about. It is to ask the federal government to treat our unemployed workers on the same level as the other provinces so that they can have the same kind of treatment. That will help us to provide some of the services that we need to provide, moving forward in this province. It will also help local municipal governments such as the region of Peel to address some of the issues they have been raising. It is impossible for them to have \$122 billion to meet infrastructure needs without some good programs coming from the federal government to assist them.

I am very supportive of this motion for the fair treatment of Ontario. I hope the federal government is listening somewhere and that we can have some of the same treatment as other provinces have, to help us do some of the things the residents of Ontario need.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: My kids, when they were little, used to engage me in conversation. They'd often say, "Daddy, it's not fair. It's not fair." That's what I called whining. So here we are, discussing a Premier saying to a province and to a country, "It's not fair." But he's the Premier; he's not my son.

I, like a few other members of this House, am approaching my first anniversary of being elected an MPP, and in that time the truth I have come to know is that this government bears a very startling resemblance to a baby's alimentary canal, with a happy appetite for taxpayers' money on one end and no responsibility on the other. In fact, I would argue that this government turns taxpayers' money into a similar byproduct. I will leave it to all members to figure out who the original author of that quote was. I'll tell on you a private basis.

This whole fairness motion is the product of two factors: Dalton McGuinty's fear, and his sense of entitlement to taxpayers' money—not his money; taxpayers'

money. You see, for a while now the McGuinty Liberals have been looking around and trying to find some scapegoat for the economic crisis and financial lows that Ontario is now experiencing. They've tried numerous tactics. They've tried excuses. We've heard them all in this House time and time again, on a daily basis—parity of the dollar, or close to it; globalization; international economic instability—and nobody has any quarrel with any of those things, but none of them are convincing in this context. Finally they've decided to saddle the federal government with their problem. Poor Ontario; the “poor me” syndrome. But you make your bed, Premier, and you lie in it.

The McGuinty approach reminds me of an interview I was watching recently on a program I think we've all seen, *Inside the Actors Studio*. James Lipton was interviewing Hugh Laurie, the lead actor in the popular series *House*. Laurie said self-deprecatingly that he's the jerk of the cast. He admitted that. He explained that, to paraphrase, every group has its dynamic, and when you walk into a room, if you can't spot the jerk, that's probably because the jerk is you. I couldn't help but think that this little bit of modern wisdom really applied to the McGuinty Liberals, and if this anecdote sparked even a minimal amount of self-reflection, I would consider it selling a great success.

Years after they started looking for a scapegoat on which to pin the economic crisis that has now befallen Ontario, they finally spotted opportunity and pointed their finger at equalization payments. Guess what? You've been blaming everyone and everything around you for years, and yet nothing has been resolved. Maybe that's because the problem is you. Not them, you.

It's clear that Premier McGuinty very badly needs someone to blame for his lack of vision and his incompetence in managing our economy in Ontario. Lack of foresight and strategic planning is, in an average person or organization, considered a shortcoming. In a Premier, in a government, this is a fatal flaw that will bring on the demise not only of that government itself, but will also contribute to the downfall of an entire province.

We are experiencing that downfall today, and Premier McGuinty is afraid that this is the beginning of his end, because his back is now to the wall and the stuff is hitting the economic fan. He finally understands that he may actually have to be held accountable for his own incompetence and economic mismanagement and so he decided to dabble in federal politics. Fairness? We all believe in fairness. The Premier just seems to have demonstrated me and again that fairness means, to him, that things have to go his way. Sorry, it doesn't fly this time. It doesn't fly this time. We call this clear, unadulterated opportunism, motivated by fear. Premier McGuinty is now afraid that he might have to answer to Ontarians for his absence, his cavalier attitude and his lack of planning.

He knows that this time, there is no PR stunt in the world that will be able to save him, no matter how many petitions he puts up on a website. I am thinking, when I

discuss websites, just how many websites does this government have to address one shortcoming or the other? It's because the consequences of the Premier's mismanagement are witnessed by the people of Ontario every day that there is nothing left to turn to but this. They see it when they see the brightest and most talented Ontarians, sometimes their own children—and, in fact, my own children—leave this province to seek opportunity elsewhere, other provinces, other countries; when we hear of job losses on a regular basis; when those who are still here are taxed to the limit without adequate services in exchange for their hard-earned money.

Now that the cake baked by previous governments has been sliced up and eaten, the McGuinty Liberals have run out of steam. There's no recipe for a new one. Rather than looking for a back door and holding out his hands for more money from the federal government, the Premier should admit that he, his finance minister and his economic minister—in whatever incarnation she happens to be today—let Ontarians down. They let Ontarians down.

First, they started by telling us that there was no crisis. One of the nice things about being in my first year is I got to witness this. I got to be our caucus representative at the Premier's media availabilities and I watched and heard him say, “There's no crisis.” Then it became, “Well, you know, there's a minor bump in the road. We'll get by it.” Then there was “an economic slowdown,” he called it. Then the Premier started suggesting that we could hold hands—my words, not his—and get through this together because he said “This, too, shall pass.” Remember that oldie but goody? Now he realizes that singing Kumbaya is not going to cut it.

Since his ministers haven't got a clue on what to do and don't want to listen, he's blaming the federal-provincial monetary arrangement that we have. Maybe it has much more to do with his spending proclivities, you think? Clearly, the McGuinty Liberals thought that if they were to just bury their heads in the sand, it would all go away like a bad dream and they could spend their way into prosperity. Winston Churchill likened a plan like that to a man standing in a bucket, trying to lift himself up by the handles. To a rational person, that is an exercise in futility, but the Liberals, it seems, are bent on proving that it can be done.

1640

What they are slowly recognizing is that at some point you will be called upon to answer for your actions. For Premier Dalton McGuinty, that time is now. He has conveniently forgotten that it is his job to make sure that Ontario doesn't need equalization payments, and it's a job he has failed at. Instead of streamlining operations, creating efficiencies and restraining their spending habits, the McGuinty Liberals decided to blame Ontario's arrangements with Ottawa.

What a curious time to decide to talk about finances, when we've been asking them to open the books for months now. It's a shame that this sudden onslaught of transparency doesn't extend to being transparent about their own fiscal situation.

The McGuinty Liberals have neglected to tell Ontarians exactly what is waiting for us around the bend and how they managed to get us into this mess in the first place. We see the storm clouds; Ontarians see the storm clouds. It's time that Mr. McGuinty consults the weatherman and realizes what is upon us. We don't know what the implications are for future investments. We don't know if we're in a recession. We don't know if we are in a deficit situation. We don't know, and the government is not willing to tell us.

In the United States, presidential candidates not much more than a month away from their election have temporarily suspended their campaigns to discuss solutions to the economic crisis that their country now faces. That's what they've done. But we are told to hang in there, the finance minister will provide an update at the end of October—not open the books, just provide us an update. So we can call this policy what? “Don't ask, don't tell”? If we don't ask, you won't tell. We're going to keep asking.

That government is putting political ambition ahead of laying the facts on the table. That would be leadership. The McGuinty Liberals refuse to follow this example. They haven't told us exactly where we are now, nor have they told us how they will get this province back to its place of prominence as Canada's economic engine. So far, they have only pointed the finger of blame.

Since we haven't seen what's in the books, we don't know how any federal money would be used and/or to what extent the McGuinty Liberals have put Ontario into an ever-widening hole. However, let's talk a little bit about what we do know. We know that federal spending on health care in Ontario is up half a billion dollars and growing at 6% per year. We know that the province has just signed the biggest infrastructure investment agreement with the federal government since World War II, and it's worth \$6.2 billion. We know that the McGuinty Liberals collect \$4.1 billion in gas tax revenues, which they do not fully use to invest in roads and highways and infrastructure while our cities cry out to address on a sustaining basis their crumbling bridges and their pothole-filled roadways.

We know that the McGuinty Liberals have imposed on Ontarians the biggest tax increase in the history of this province, introducing the health premium—we like to call it the health tax, because we like calling a spade a spade—and raking in \$2.7 billion a year for the last four years. There's no end in sight and none, as far as we can see, earmarked for health care—that for which it was supposedly intended—in any specific way. Where's the go-forward on another medical school? We talk, in other debates, about international medical graduates. Where's the money for a medical school? We know that some of the colleges want to open one, but we don't see any allocation. Where's the master planning approval for a hospital that would serve, in part, my own riding of Thornhill, because part of it sits in Vaughan? There's a Vaughan hospital that needs \$3 million to \$5 million in seed money, and this in the face of a shortchanged 905,

shortchanged across the board in terms of the per capita spending on health care.

We know that government spending is up 31%. That's far higher than the rate of population growth and it's far higher than the rate of inflation. Sadly, government spending is probably the only statistic that Ontario scores highly in. We're right up there. I have to ask, does any of that 31% consist of investments in rehabilitation programs for government ministers addicted to spending taxpayers' money? With this kind of record, it's small wonder that they are looking for someone or something to blame, and they figure it's prime time to make demands of the feds.

If their Liberal cousins at the federal level were to take over in Ottawa, so much the easier to get some cash to quietly patch up the holes that their spending habits have created in their budget. If the fairness lobby campaign doesn't work—and thankfully, it won't, if the polls are right—then Premier McGuinty, faced with the prospect of having to table a made-in-Ontario solution, will get in front of a camera, he'll put on his best Caspar Milquetoast face, he will clasp his hands in his classic speaking pose and he will make up some excuse as to why this, yet again, is not his fault and really, all in all, he has nothing to do with it.

Let's get back to this very misguided notion of entitlement, and let's not confuse it with standing up for Ontario. I'm standing up for Ontario now. I want the truth. Long before I contemplated becoming an MPP, I saw Dalton McGuinty as a politician who considered taxpayers' money as his own. That's one of the reasons that I was motivated to run. Now, as an elected MPP for the riding of Thornhill, I know that nothing irks Dalton McGuinty more than a tax dollar he can't get his hands on. That is at the core of his so-called fairness campaign. What he really means is that it's not fair that he can't spend that money. That's at the core of his fairness campaign: He can't spend that money.

Premier McGuinty, here's the message: This is not your money. And I'm going to say it again: This is not your money. We in the opposition benches understand that the money transferred to Ottawa is an arrangement between the people of Ontario and the federal government, and, if anything, it should be given back to the people of Ontario and not to Dalton McGuinty, because it's not his money.

In closing, I'd like to move a motion. I'd like to move that the government motion be amended by adding the following point at the end of it: “fairness in Ontario's taxation policies so that people already overburdened by taxes in this province are not subjected to the proposed carbon tax.”

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Shurman moves that government motion 84 be amended by adding the following point at the end: “fairness in Ontario's taxation policies so that people already overburdened by taxes in this province are not subjected to the proposed carbon tax.”

Further debate?

1650

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I have a couple of things to say, and I just want to provide a little bit of a history. I'll speak to the amendment as well as we go.

I recall 1990 to 1995, the then-Premier Bob Rae—a New Democrat for many, many years, 30 at least, and then he turned Liberal. I recall those difficult days that we faced economically, and we used to think about what it is that we had to do to help ourselves to deal with the economy. When we were looking to the federal government for support, they pulled the rug from under us.

Some of you who were here in 1990, city councillors and others and MPPs who might have been here, will recall that we used to have a national plan called the Canada assistance plan. We used to cost-share welfare between the federal government and the provinces. It was 50-50. Mulroney decided to change the rules, and change the rules at a time when we desperately needed their support. In that recession in 1990, 1991, 1992—it lasted, it seemed, for a long, long time—we were pleading, begging, like the Liberals are doing now, to Mulroney to please not change the rules. That recession then caused so much unemployment that many of them ended up on the welfare rolls. It's not happening here today—yet. But many ended up on welfare, and our welfare bill went from \$1 billion to \$6 billion in no time. So we were saying to Mulroney, “You can't do that. You can't change the rules like that, especially at a time when we need federal support.” I recall so many Tories, alas Liberals, saying—Stockwell in particular. You will remember him sitting just about here—no, no, actually, it was over there—and he would shout out. “You don't have a revenue problem, you have a spending problem,” he used to say, and he wasn't the only one. There were many others who said the same thing. Gary Carr, who's now a Liberal, used to say the same thing.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I know. He used to say the same thing. So many Liberals used to say the same thing. They had no sympathy for Bob Rae and his caucus. Do you understand? I think you're getting a sense of what I'm getting at because there's a history lesson here, and it does come around.

So the support that we desperately needed wasn't coming and the money that we desperately needed wasn't coming. We were totally blamed for that economic recession. Liberals blamed us; Tories blamed us. They said, “Oh, no, it's got nothing to do with other universal circumstances, world circumstances. It's about being a New Democrat. It's about New Democratic policies that have caused this recession, bringing everything down. I listen with some humour as Mr. Dwight Duncan, the Minister of Finance, says, “It's the high dollar; yes, the manufacturing sector caused by the high dollar.” Sometimes he talks about high hydro rates, which he says he's solved, but hasn't.

Interjection: Oil.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Oil prices skyrocketing. You've got the Minister of Finance trying to list a whole

number of things to say, “No, it's not us. It's the world, other economic forces beyond our control.” Where was Duncan when we needed him? Was he a city councillor then? Because we could have used Duncan on our side in 1990, defending New Democrats, using those arguments then to say, “It's got nothing to do with poor Bob Rae and his party. It's world forces.” And now Duncan, the Minister of Finance, so many years later is saying—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You're quite welcome, Speaker.

He's saying, “It's not us. We're not the authors of this problem. It's beyond our control. Do you know what the problem is? It's the federal government. That's the problem.”

See, you've got to follow this with some humour, right? Because when Harris was there, you will recall, the former Premier, he used to whine in the same way. So it's comical to hear the member from Thornhill saying, “You Liberals are whining,” because his leader whined too, like the best of them, and he was a big guy, a big boy. He whined like a child, saying, “Where is the federal government when we need them?”

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Chrétien was at the time nowhere to be found. In fact, when Chrétien came in 1993, we couldn't find him either. Chrétien and the other—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Martin.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Martin. Thank you very much. Speaker, we need your help from time to time. That was very good. Mr. Martin created a housing policy in 1990 and he said, “When we form government, we're going to have a national housing strategy.”

Mr. Jeff Leal: He did.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The Liberals say he did. You know nothing. I'm sorry. That policy was abandoned. No sooner did Monsieur Chrétien get into office with Paul Martin than that policy was abandoned. It's as if it never existed, as if Paul Martin never said anything, as if that report had never been produced. But it was there, and when they get into government, what do they do? They slash, they cut, they become good Conservative managers.

They cut, and do you know where they cut, Speaker? Take a guess. They cut on the backs of the unemployed, using the benefits that they paid for—unemployment insurance benefits—using that money against them and using that whole pile of money to pay down the deficit. Some 40% of the deficit was cut by using unemployment insurance dollars: the very same Liberals who now say the Tories are shortchanging them on the unemployment front, that we pay into that and it doesn't come back to Ontario.

Liberals, when they were there with Messieurs Chrétien and Martin—your friends, your federal colleagues—used that money that came from Ontario to make cuts to slash the deficit, and made it impossible for people to have the benefits by making eligibility more complex, by requiring longer hours to be able to apply.

Liberals did that—except some of you don't know and are quite happy not to know. You're quite happy to be blissfully ignorant of these things. I understand that. But you did all that too.

So the little history lesson has to do with how all governments whine, but I have to admit and tell you that whining is not a political strategy and it's certainly a bad economic strategy. It just doesn't work. I know you're trying and you've got to do your best. I know that. You have to divert attention from yourselves and attack another enemy; that's clear, and I understand that. That is the purpose of your resolution: how to deflect attention away from you and attach it to the Conservatives, which the Tories did with Chrétien before you and as New Democrats desperately tried to get help from the federal Tories and Liberals before Mike Harris—except in our time, nobody listened at all. At least you guys have the Toronto Star. God bless. At least you have the Toronto Star editorials on a daily basis giving you a little boost, a little help, a little ideological assistance. It's a big help, I've got to tell you. It's not every day that you've got a national newspaper that delivers 400,000 newspapers to every door—not every door, but 400,000 homes and other places. It's not often that you get a paper like that saying how good the Liberals are. Would that New Democrats were so lucky as to have a little newspaper that delivers a couple of hundred newsletters or newspapers to some homes to give us a little bit of a boost. Would that we were so lucky, but we're not. So we do our best on our own, with 20-minute speeches at Queen's Park and travelling here and there from time to time. That's what we've got.

1700

So is your strategy of whining a good one? I don't think it's working, by the way. I really don't. I know you're trying, and all of you are taking your 10 minutes, because you need to talk to the public, right? You can't let New Democrats and Tories do this debate for you. You've got to take your time to defend yourselves against those federal Tories and how they're undermining you in the province. I understand. You have no fiscal capacity whatsoever. You're utterly useless as a province. I understand that. Isn't that the argument you're making? The argument you're making is, "We provincial Liberals"—meaning you, not me—"are utterly helpless, unable to do anything. We have no fiscal capacity whatsoever, so we have to plead and genuflect on a regular basis to the federal Tories, saying 'Please, we need your help. We need some extra money.'"

You understand that you do have the fiscal capacity if you wanted to. I know that you have raised, and are raising every year, \$2.4 billion from the health tax. I know, and you got beaten up for that; I understand. But in that instance, you had to break your promise to be able to raise revenues. So, clearly it suggests that you know how to do it. You did it and, yes, you got beaten up for it, but you could use the fiscal tools again. But you are unwilling to do so because you're afraid to do so, so your best political and economic strategy is, "Let's whine with

the federal government. Let's blame them for everything."

It's not a bad strategy with 20% to 25% of the people. They'll believe you, because 25% to 30% of the public will always hate Conservatives, and that's not a bad beginning. But the question is, what do you do now for the other 10%, 15% or 20% in terms of a political strategy? That's where you, my friends, are failing Ontarians.

I know the strategy: Download to the city as much as you can. The city of Toronto, at least, has obliged, because they're now taxing. They're broke. You understand that Toronto gives the province 40% of their money and they get less back. The province gives Canada 40% of its revenue and gets less back. You understand that. You're quite happy for the discrepancy to happen with the cities, but you're unhappy for the discrepancy to happen vis-à-vis the federal government. The city is saying, "It's unfair that you don't give us what we give you in return," as you are arguing, "It's unfair that we give the federal government 40% or 42% of our revenues and we get less in return." It's okay to punish the city, but it's not okay for the federal government to punish the provincial government. Do you understand the contradiction? You don't, because why would you?

You're either unable to follow the argument or you are able to follow the argument but you cannot accept the argument, because to do so would be to say, "I am an intelligent human being. I hear what you're saying, and if I admit it, then I am caught in the contradiction." So you have to pretend that you don't understand what I'm saying. I hear you; I do. But I have to say to the citizens of Ontario that we are moving in a direction that many of you will be unhappy with in the next 10, 15 years. We are moving in a user-fee system. We are moving away from an income tax system because provincial governments are afraid to tax, especially those who could afford to give a little more.

How often do I stand in this place and say, "You could tax me a little more"? We now earn over \$100,000. We could afford to pay a few thousand dollars more in income tax. We can. And unlike the Conservative members who moved an amendment talking about taxation policy and how overtaxed we are, I disagree with the Tories in this regard. I disagree with them, because that philosophy and ideology leads us into a world where moving into a user fee system suggests and says in fact that people who have less money to pay will end up bearing the greater cost for every service they require. That's what we're moving into.

I guarantee that tolls will come in this province after the next government comes into power; not before, because McGuinty can't have it before. You understand that. There's no way that McGuinty could support tolls on roads before the election. He's too politically wise for that. But after the next election, should he be so lucky to be re-elected, tolls will come in Ontario.

And what's wrong with tolls? It's a tax on everyone, and that tax will be disproportionate to people who need

a car but don't have as much money as those who have a lot of money and it doesn't matter how much you charge them for that toll for the use of that road. So that is the problem.

I'm just talking about tolls as one example of a user fee system which I see happening everywhere—everywhere. For provincial services as well as municipal services, more and more comes out of our pocket. We are taking over the swimming pools in Toronto. It's given over to an agency of which we know little, where we can't get into their meetings. It's all in private, run by David Crombie, a man I respect, but it's all private stuff. So they've been given \$4 million by the Liberal government to run these pools free for one year. Starting the following year, there will be a user fee on that pool.

User fees are the name of the game in this political and social life. That's what we are moving to, from now until the next 10, 15 years, and those who are middle class, with incomes that are not so very high, are going to get whacked.

So I say to myself, "How could left-leaning Liberals"—because there are a few—"think that's an acceptable system? How do they live with that? What are they doing in their caucus to fight that temptation that is so alluring?" It's alluring because they have no other way to get money, because they're afraid to tax. And they're afraid to tax because if they do, the Tories are going to blame them for being a tax-and-spend party like, of course, the image the New Democrats have. Can't have that; no, we can't have that: "Liberals are fiscal conservatives. That is what we must inculcate in the minds of most citizens. We are fiscal conservatives"—i.e., Liberals—"and we compete very strongly with Tories in that regard."

Yes, you have to stick to the image that you're left-leaning in social stuff, in social services and blah blah blah. But I don't know where the left-leaning Liberals are in this regard. I don't hear them; I don't see them. They appear to be invisible. They don't make any public statements. They don't appear to have any influence with the Liberal government. I don't hear their voices in the community. I don't see it in newspapers. They're simply going along, and going along means accepting that the Liberal Party has become so very conservative that often they are so indistinguishable that they could merge, literally, from time to time. You could merge quite easily, actually, and I suspect 50% of them would come to your ranks, no problemo, and we would probably pick up 20% because some of them are left-leaning. But they would stay with the Conservative Party because they would estimate that if they came with us, they might not win, because that's what Liberals are, opportunists in this regard. Some of them would come for the ideology of New Democrats, but I'm not sure how many.

But look, it's a cowardly strategy to beg for money and to divert attention from your obligations of government, and trying to blame the federal government for not helping you out. You're abdicating your responsibility and your power. You're abdicating your fiscal potential

to solve some of the social and economic issues. I hope you use that power and stop whining.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?
1710

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Apparently, the member for Trinity-Spadina is not going to hear how the Liberal left feels about this bill. We're not going to hear about how the Liberal right feels about it either. As with so many bills in this House in the last four or five years, the debate does not include the Liberal Party. I find that very, very strange, a government that doesn't participate in the bills before the House. Surely their members have something to say on this issue, and yet they sit in their seats and look perplexed perhaps, but they don't seem to rise and speak to the issues of the day.

The member for Trinity-Spadina makes a compelling argument when he talks about, "It's not us, it's them." Of course, this is a tried and true political tactic. Sometimes it works; sometimes it doesn't. Certainly in the United States, I think Mr. Bush has tried to blame others for the things that he's being criticized for, and of course he's being criticized for many, many issues. He always seems to find that there's a nice scapegoat around. It's like the politician who's making a speech and says, "If I say anything wrong, I have the names of five people in my pocket that I can blame for anything I say," so he feels absolved of any responsibility. That's not the way the system is supposed to work. We're supposed to be taking a much more hands-on approach to the way these things work.

I think people in Ontario generally understand that within an economy, within a jurisdiction, within a province, within a riding or a city, there are wheels within wheels that turn and feed upon each other. When there are terrible conditions, as there were in the early 1990s and as there are perhaps in the days ahead that we're looking at—this economic meltdown in the United States is a true, worrisome situation. It will be a meltdown in the world, I think. It looks like the US Congress is not very enthusiastic about anteing up \$700 billion or \$800 billion—that's almost \$1 trillion—to bail out people who were not very cautious in the way that they handled their finances. One chap on the news the other night was talking eloquently about how un-American it was to bail out someone who had abused their powers. That may be true, and I think that kind of thought might carry the day in the States, and that's when the second shoe is going to drop.

We're going to see the world economies hit again if the Americans don't come through with their \$700-billion or \$800-billion bailout. There will be only one solution to it, and I'm afraid that's inflation and high interest rates, so get ready. I don't think we'll see 22% again this time, but we'll certainly see interest rates in excess of 10% and inflation two or three points above that. I'm not sure it's a fact, but it certainly is hanging in the balance. This is recorded, so someone will be able to point to you and say, "This is what you said." I'm not saying that is the way it is going to be, but I think there is

a very good possibility that that might happen if saner heads don't prevail.

I began talking about the wheels within wheels. I think most people understand that there isn't one villain; there are wheels within wheels that affect an economy, affect a city and affect political processes. When that happens, it isn't necessarily—the world is operating on this level, on this day, at this snapshot in time. It is up to Ontario to operate just a little bit better than the other jurisdictions around. We don't have to aspire, in these difficult times, to 6% and 7% growth. We have to aspire to growth that is at least average in Canada, and we can do that. We can do that in Ontario with Ontario-based policies and by making our jurisdiction just a little bit more competitive. We don't have to solve the problems of the world. We have to find our place within those problems and make Ontario as economically viable as we possibly can.

Of course businesses, over time, move to low-cost jurisdictions, and unfortunately the lag time when businesses begin moving is very, very long. You can begin to see it happen—after about a year and a half, it will show up in some of the statistics. That's what's so criminal about the lack of action this government has taken over the term of the last five years. They haven't done enough to make Ontario as competitive as they could to attract new businesses to move in.

The reasons they haven't done that are many, but we saw one in the House this afternoon. There was a bill debated about apprenticeship ratios. Ontario has an apprenticeship ratio of three to one, the highest in Canada. Most other Canadian provinces have a one-to-one ratio; if you have one electrician, you can have one apprentice. That way, you get new apprentices, expanded businesses and efficiencies in scale and everything else that goes along with good growth and good business sense.

There were apprentices in the gallery who wanted a one-to-one ratio so that they could get a job and go to work. There were also electricians in the gallery who didn't want this, because they see this as a dilution of their trade. They see this as a threat to their future. Now, in an expanding economy it would not be a threat to their future, but they see it as that. They've been told by their union bosses that this is a threat to their future. Then we see in this House the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship, who is supposed to be creating the environment in Ontario that will help small businesses expand and grow, vote against lowering this ratio. He voted for the unions and against small business.

This is just one very small example of how this government doesn't tend to make Ontario the most competitive it can be in every sense of the word. We have to be the most competitive jurisdiction certainly in the Great Lakes basin. In some industries we have to compete with Texas or California, particularly in the aircraft industry. We have a number of aircraft assemblers or builders in Ontario, more than most people would think. We have Diamond Aircraft in London; de Havilland, which is Bombardier; and I believe Fleet Aircraft is still in Fort

Erie manufacturing parts for the aircraft industry. Those are three large suppliers, and there are a lot of companies that will supply them with parts and partially manufactured pieces. All of that goes together to create quite an industry, and we have to compete where that industry exists.

Today, California, Washington and St. Louis are the primary areas in the United States that are building large aircraft. Of course that's a worldwide industry, and we have to compete with the Europeans and the Brazilians, when we're talking about the water bombers that Bombardier makes—one of the world's best manufacturers of water bombers.

All of that comes around to the fact that, as a government, you support the things that help business succeed. Why would a government want to help business succeed? Of course, most people who have a private sector job work for a business. If you work for a business and businesses succeed, we have more jobs. Of course, more jobs are a good thing, and that comes from helping people succeed in those kinds of elements.

Today, we're debating the fairness motion. As the member for Trinity-Spadina pointed out, fairness is not actually what this is all about; this is about blaming somebody else for the problems we find ourselves in and that we can't extricate ourselves from or that we're not willing to make the effort to extricate ourselves from.

1720

So what have the results of this been? Well, in the last three or four months the results have been huge. The results have been a loss of a further 21,000 manufacturing jobs that have been lost from companies such as Quebecor, a printing company in Etobicoke; it closed its doors, one of the largest printers in Canada, 450 people out of work; Plastech from Leamington, Essex-Kent, they laid off 150 people; General Motors, 1,400 people on May 9, 2008. Some time later, General Motors laid off another thousand people in June, less than a month later. That's 2,400 people from General Motors that have been laid off. Advantech telecommunications in Cornwall laid off 75 people, all over the course of the last four months. Ford automobile in Windsor laid off 430 people. The government has given them a large grant, and hopefully Ford will reopen an engine plant and hire some new people; they laid off 900 people a year ago when they shut that engine plant down. Canac Kitchens, in Thornhill, closed their doors, and that's a thousand people laid off, a thousand good-paying manufacturing jobs gone from Ontario. Affina Group, an automotive parts manufacturer in the very heart of all of Ontario, in that wonderful, beautiful town of Milton, they closed their plant and there's 200-plus jobs that have gone from Milton; 200 people who are living in one of the finest communities you will find anywhere in the world, Milton, Ontario, and here this plant has closed down and they'll have to look for jobs elsewhere. Lafarge Cement has laid off 19 people in Oxford. Hallmark cards, the greeting cards people—I wonder if they've produced a card for Dalton McGuinty. They've closed their

Willowdale plant, and there are 200 people out of work. Even Magna International, a large automotive manufacturer in St. Thomas, laid off 400 people from their manufacturing plant. Progressive Molded Products in Willowdale closed, with 2,000 people out of work.

These closures and these job layoffs all happened within the last four months. This is an absolute disaster for the province of Ontario. This government is not doing anything about it. They're sticking to their plan, their five-point plan they're so proud of, and yet that five-point plan continues to see this kind of disappearance of jobs week after week, month after month, and season after season. Ford cancelled a shift at their paint plant in Oakville, which borders on Milton. There's another 500 jobs gone for Ford. Owens-Illinois glass, the people that make CorningWare; they had a plant in Toronto and there were 430 employees in that plant until it closed down on July 29. John Deere tractor in Welland: 800 people. That plant started in, I believe, 1911. They were one of the principal manufacturers of farm equipment in North America at one time, and today they are closed. They're moving to Mexico, and they are moving to Mexico because Ontario is too high-cost a jurisdiction to continue to do business in. The Toyota assembly plant in Woodstock: This plant isn't even open yet. They haven't finished construction. It doesn't open, I believe, until later this year or early next, and yet they've already announced that they will not have two shifts at the plant, they will only have one, and that means 800 jobs that will not be opening up in Woodstock. Linamar auto parts in Guelph: 800 jobs. That's an auto parts manufacturer that's closed its doors—800 jobs; they have laid off 800 people in that fair city of Guelph, and that's 800 families that are going to have to find a new way to get by day to day and week to week.

Henniges Automotive, an automotive plant in Welland, has also cut 235 jobs from its payroll. Those job cuts are very, very hurtful for those communities; they created a great deal of unhappiness in the area. What has the government done? The government has given out major grants to many of these companies to try to attract them to come to Ontario, or they've given them grants in order to compensate for the non-competitive nature of Ontario and help them to stay in Ontario.

And who have they given this money to? They've given \$90 million to the Ford motor car company of Canada. What do we get for that \$90 million? We got 30 jobs that were laid off at Ford motor car company. So although we paid them \$90 million to stay in Ontario, they still cut 930 jobs. We didn't get increased jobs; usually, when you pay somebody, you get something back for it. In this case, we paid them \$90 million and they cut 930 jobs.

Linamar Corp. in Guelph: We paid them \$13 million. What did we get for our \$13 million? We got 800 jobs cut—not 800 jobs hired; not 800 more jobs; we got 800 jobs cut. They laid off 800 people for \$13 million. It's a good thing we didn't give them \$20 million—they could've laid off 1,000 people. This whole process is so wrong-headed.

General Motors—here's the big one. We gave them \$117,551,004. I don't know where the \$4 came from, but there it is: \$117 million that we gave to General Motors, and, as you would expect—it's the largest grant that this government handed out, and that's taxpayers' money, all the taxpayers who used to have a job and used to pay taxes; that's their money, \$117 million. Of course, that's the largest grant that we handed out, and General Motors had the largest cut in their payroll. They cut 2,400 workers from their payroll in Ontario. The entire program is very, very difficult.

I have a real philosophical problem with the grant system. You've got a grant system: You pay a company within a sector or region and you give them a grant to do something. But what about their competition? They have to now compete with a company that got a government grant. The whole system is so wrong-headed. It would be far better, in my opinion and in the opinion of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario—we would be far further ahead if we, instead of handing out grants, lowered the cost of doing business. Lowering the cost of doing business not only affects the winning company that got the grant—in this case, they wouldn't get the grant anymore—but we'd take that money and spread it across all businesses in Ontario so that everyone in Ontario would win. And our competition in other jurisdictions would look around and say, "Ontario is a low-cost jurisdiction. That's a place where we have to be if we're going to be expanding. If we're going to be looking for a new place to do business, Ontario is where we'd better be, because it's low-cost, it understands business, and it understands what business needs to operate and expand."

But that's not happening today. That happened during our eight years in government; that happened when we created well over a million new jobs in Ontario, because companies were coming from all over the world to Ontario. When they moved to Ontario and opened up plants and created new jobs, every one—every single one of those new jobs—was a new taxpayer. And there being a new taxpayer, we could afford to pay for the education, the health care, the environmental regulations, looking after the things that people in Ontario expect their government to look after. That's not happening today in Ontario, and from what I can see, it's not going to happen in the future. This province is going to be in very deep difficulty when the next shoe drops in the financial communities of the world.

1730

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Further debate.

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to join the debate on what the Premier referred to as, I believe, "fairness." In fact, I'm going of quote from the Premier's motion. I found it most interesting to hear the Premier articulate very clearly. I'm certain he was very sincere about this motion as well. I quote the pertinent part of the motion that I want to focus on as follows: all "candidates in the upcoming federal election to outline their plan to ensure Ontario is treated fairly so that our province has the same opportunities to succeed as the rest of Canada."

Among the specific points on which the Premier in his motion states that he would like to see fairness achieved is Ontario's public health care system. To this part of the motion, I have some good news and I have some bad news that I want to share with my colleagues and people who are watching this debate. The good news is that I myself would like to see a fair and equitable distribution of health care funding in the province of Ontario. No question, in all regions of this province regardless of whether it is northern Ontario, southwestern Ontario, the city of Toronto, wherever we are in the province of Ontario, we should all have a fair and equitable distribution of funding, and so I am on the Premier's side when he argues for that.

The bad news is that the only member in Ottawa who can implement these principles of fairness and equity and health care funding in Ontario is the member for Ottawa South himself, and that's Premier. When it came to assigning health care dollars in the province of Ontario, it wasn't the Harper government that decided to discriminate against my riding of Newmarket-Aurora or York region; it was the provincial government, headed by the member for Ottawa South and his government, who were responsible for discriminating against York region and specifically my riding.

So I want to bring to the Premier's attention that, in the spirit with which he brought this motion to the House, I want him to consider very carefully what he and his government are doing to bring unfairness of health care funding into this province—he and his government. The Premier and his government are responsible for what is happening in my riding. I want to share with the House what that fairness according to the Premier looks like and ask members of this House to consider whether in fact the Premier, when he calls on the federal government to be fair in distributing funding, is being consistent with what he himself as the Premier and his government are doing in the province of Ontario.

The Premier and his new health minister will know that the Newmarket-Aurora area is within one of the fastest-growing regions in the country. Over the next three years, our region will account for some 18% of the annual population growth in this province. That means that our hospitals in York region—there are three of them—will have to provide treatment to, on average, about 30,000 new people every single year. Despite that compelling fact and these compelling demographics, York region receives much less funding per capita for hospital and health care services compared to the average of the rest of the province. I ask, "Where is the fairness in that, and who is responsible for that?" It's not Stephen Harper, it's not the federal members of Parliament, it's not the federal candidates who are involved in this federal election to whom the Premier is appealing; it is the Premier who sits in this House, his health minister and the members of this government who make those allocations. They are responsible for that, and on behalf of my constituents, I want to hold them accountable.

I am looking forward to the Premier's taking his own message of fairness to heart, and that they would look

very carefully at the disparity of funding that is happening in this province, allocated by the Ontario Ministry of Health, that he and his health minister would take this to heart, and would implement whatever changes are necessary to ensure that we bring fairness in health care funding into the province of Ontario, which is the jurisdiction of this Legislature.

Specifically, we in York region receive \$232 less per resident for hospital funding alone, with the result that our local hospitals are underfunded by more than \$290 million each year compared to other regions in this province. How does the Premier, who argues from his position as Premier of this province that there should be fairness in funding, square these numbers? And how does he justify, knowing full well that this disparity exists? I'm asking on behalf of my constituents, who no doubt have listened to the Premier's motion and no doubt, as I, support that in principle because there should be fairness in funding, and there should be no reason why one region of this country is treated any differently from any other region; and likewise, there should be no reason why any region in this province is treated any differently from any other region.

But it's not just our hospitals that are underfunded. When compared to the other 14 designated health regions in the province, we in York region are fourth-lowest funded for home care services, we are the fourth-lowest funded for mental health services, we are the lowest funded for addiction services in the province, and the third-lowest funded for long-term residential care for our seniors. For total health care funding, we're the second-lowest funded for all health care services in the province of Ontario.

These are numbers that are not new. I have been a member of this Legislature since 1995. It continues to be an issue, particularly for high-growth areas in this province, that funding keep pace with population growth. I was pleased to hear the Premier speak so passionately about the need to bring fairness into funding of health care services, and that's why I'm hopeful today that, by once again bringing the facts to the attention of the Premier and his new Minister of Health regarding the underfunding of health care for York region, he and his health minister will do what is necessary to stop the unfairness and to ensure that York region is brought into the same level of funding as every other region in the province.

We need real action now; we don't need motions. I know how cabinet works, and actually it's a very straightforward process the Premier has to engage in to end the unfairness against which he railed here, and it's very simple. At the next cabinet meeting, the Premier simply needs to look at his health minister, who probably sits to his right, and say, "Minister, I would like you to bring to the next cabinet meeting the information necessary to ensure that we have fair funding of all regions in this province because I don't want to be found to be representing fairness on one side and then be found wanting on the other and not doing what I'm preaching." I'm

sure the Premier would not want to be caught in that position.

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Members of the provincial Parliament, not the federal government, have the responsibility to ensure fairness in funding for health care in this province. You know that. You also know that it is the McGuinty government alone that can achieve real fairness and equity in health care funding in Ontario, and I trust that in the spirit of this debate perhaps we can at the end of this debate have an agreement from this government that they will act on their own motion and apply that principle that they so effectively articulated and that they want the federal government to exercise—that they will bring those same principles to bear on their own work here in province of Ontario. But I'm not optimistic. The current policy of this government and the member for Ottawa South, by track record, consists of politically expedient crisis funding announcements that only serve to widen the funding gap and cause underfunded regions like York region to fall further behind the rest of Ontario. I'm sure the member for Ottawa South will respond by once again laying the blame at the feet of the federal government, as he regularly does in other cases when the government's funding of critical public services comes up short.

I'll give it one more try. I'll force myself to be optimistic. Having listened to the Premier as he tabled his resolution, perhaps there's been an awakening, perhaps there's been a realization that all Ontarians should be treated fairly and equally, and perhaps we'll see a change of policy. I'll remain hopeful for my constituents.

The fact is that if the Premier doesn't move decisively—and he's the man who can—then who will?

It's one thing for the Premier of Ontario to say to the Prime Minister of the country, "Treat all of your citizens fairly," but the only way that is actually going to have traction with the Prime Minister is if the Prime Minister can see that that same principle is being applied in the administration of the Premier's own policies. If not, then it is mere political rhetoric; it's simply more perception than reality.

I'm sure the Premier will agree with me that this is not a new debate we're having. He's heard it. I heard the Premier when he was not the Premier, when he was in opposition, speak often on this whole issue himself. So I know that in his heart he feels it is the right thing to do, to ensure that there's fairness. What the Premier now has to find is a way to actually implement that. You see, it's easy to create public policy. It's difficult to implement it.

In closing, what I would ask the Premier to do is to direct his Minister of Health to bring forward a population-based funding formula for health care in this province that will once and for all remove the politics from funding of health care and allow health care funding to be based on actual needs within our communities. When that happens, it will be an important first step to ensuring the kind of fairness that the Premier himself is calling for.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the honourable member and all honourable members.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It being 5:45 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday morning at 9:00 a.m. Have a great weekend.

The House adjourned at 1745.

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

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Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
		Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
		Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu

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liott, Christine (PC)	Whitby—Oshawa	
ynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
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orwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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idak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West—Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest—Glanbrook	
zsek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges—Markham	
frey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton—Springdale	
nes, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	
ees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
ormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
lar, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea—Gore—Malton	
Winter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
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al, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
vac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
McLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean—Carleton	
ngat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga—Brampton South / Mississauga—Brampton-Sud	
urchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity—Spadina	
artiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
utthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
uro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
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Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton—Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga—Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services / Ministre des Petites Entreprises et des Services aux consommateurs
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
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First Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)



Monday 29 September 2008

Lundi 29 septembre 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 29 September 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 29 septembre 2008

The House met at 0900.

Prayers.

JACK WILSON

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just ask the members to remain standing for a moment of silence in recognition of Jack Wilson, father of one of our presiding officers, Jim Wilson.

The House observed a moment's silence.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 25, 2008, on the amendment to the motion relating to calling upon all federal party leaders and Ontario candidates in the upcoming federal election to outline their plan to ensure fair treatment for Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wasn't sure I was going to be speaking so soon on this. I thought we had completed with Mr. Klees and we were going on to the complete rotation here. So I apologize for my tardiness in not getting up in time.

I want to just read the motion and the amendment as well. The Premier moved the motion last week. He said:

"I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls upon all federal party leaders and Ontario candidates in the upcoming federal election to outline their plan to ensure Ontario is treated fairly so that our province has the same opportunities to succeed as the rest of Canada, including:

"—fairness for unemployed workers who currently receive \$4,630 less in benefits and supports than Canadians in other provinces;

"—fairness for Ontario's public health care system which is receiving \$773 million less in per capita funding this year than the rest of Canada;

"—fairness for our economy in southern Ontario, the only region in Canada with no federal economic development programs;

"—fairness in Ontario's infrastructure funding that is being shortchanged by \$970 million in per capita funding compared to the rest of Canada;

"—fairness in equalization payments with a commitment that if Ontario qualifies for payments under the

equalization program, we will receive our full share of funding as the program exists today; and

"—a commitment to reduce the drain on Ontario that is now caused by annual transfers of more than \$20 billion from this province for programs and services in the rest of Canada."

Our colleague Mr. Shurman had also made an amendment to this, which apparently we will be voting on this morning. He adds that the government motion "be amended by adding the following point at the end: '—fairness in Ontario's taxation policies so that people already overburdened by taxes in this province are not subjected to the proposed carbon tax.'" I believe it's Mr. Dion who is planning that with his green shift movement in the federal platform.

One of the things I wanted to bring up is that I find it quite disturbing—maybe more ironic than disturbing—that we have a motion like this on the floor. I think that, generally speaking, most of the people in this Legislature would support reaching out to the federal government to see if we can receive what we would call better treatment for our taxpayers. I think that's our responsibility and I think in the end we will probably be supporting this. However, the reason I feel a little disturbed about this is that we tried this before in the House with resolutions, back when it was the Harris government and the Chrétien government was in Ottawa.

Health care funding at that time was around 13%. On every dollar put into health care spending in the province of Ontario, 86 or 87 cents was paid for by the province of Ontario, and the federal government was putting in 13 or 14 cents. You may recall we ran some ads on TV and that type of thing. And in this House we put through a motion that all three party leaders write to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance at that time, in a non-partisan manner, asking the federal government to up the funding to health care in Ontario. I recall that letter was sent out. The letter was under the signature of, at that time, Premier Harris; the third party leader, Mr. Hampton; and the Leader of the Opposition, who at that time was, of course, Premier McGuinty.

Premier Harris and the third party leader, Mr. Hampton, agreed to sign that letter—and you may recall that letter was all over. But the Premier, at that time the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. McGuinty, refused to sign it. Now he's here today asking everyone in this House to support his motion when he wouldn't sign a letter that was sent to the Prime Minister on behalf of health care.

I see today they're asking for "fairness for Ontario's public health care system which is receiving \$773 million

less in per capita funding this year than the rest of Canada." I can't understand why he would ask for this today, yet five, six or seven years ago, when he was the Leader of the Opposition, he refused to sign the letter of support for that. I find that very disturbing, because it's playing politics with a very, very important issue. I hope that if there's even one cent that can be gained for the province of Ontario through this resolution today that we will—I will support it for that reason alone. But at that time, the Liberal Party would not sign that particular motion. It's disturbing that today we come back and hear it's a whole new day and we're supposed to forget about the past.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: He's doing what Harris tried to do.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: But the reality is that Prime Minister Chrétien originally balanced the books of the country by—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: He's following Harris. That's what he's doing.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Would you quit?

What I'm saying is that the Prime Minister in fact did balance the books of the country by cutting health care payments; that's what happened. And here we are today still \$773 million behind. I will give complete credit to the current federal government. I believe very strongly that they've done a fairly good job in trying to up payments in a lot of different areas. I know that they've settled the outstanding labour market agreement plan that had been in place. I know that just this year alone, the Ontario government received another \$311 million, effective April 1, for training purposes. Now, that being said, I believe about \$2 billion in additional training money has flowed this year from the federal government to the Ontario government for the sole purpose of re-training individuals, and I don't think they've ever received one bit of credit for any of that. We try to bring this up in the House, but when these fancy program announcements are made, we never hear that that was actually federal money.

0910

I know that just a week ago, we had some issues around additional funding for the Midland Area Reading Council—the most vulnerable people in our society are the people who can't read and write—and they were having to lay off people at their offices in Midland. Basically, the government was humiliated into coming up with some of the labour market agreement money to help the Midland Area Reading Council balance their books for this year, because they're teaching the most vulnerable people in our society. If anybody needs to be retrained, surely it's the people who need to learn how to read and write so they can get some kind of a job.

We talk about fairness, and I am very, very concerned about the agriculture community. I took a short trip down to Quebec this year. I've got to tell you—something better in agriculture is happening in the province of Quebec than is happening here. I travelled through a lot of rural Quebec, and the one thing I noticed was a lot of additions going on to barns. I saw a lot of modern equip-

ment in the fields. It seemed that every farm was alive and viable. What we've seen in the province of Ontario, is that one by one, large operations—whether it's in dairy, beef or hog production, we've seen them dropping off. Right now, in the county of Simcoe, which I believe is the largest county in the province, I believe there are only two hog farmers left—two people who are actually raising hogs. That's a far cry from 10 or 12 years ago, when we had probably 150 hog operations in the county of Simcoe.

Fairness is also something I want to talk about. I don't see these sorts of things in the motion, but if we're going to talk about fairness, I think we have to start talking about fairness to our small business operators. One of the things that is really disturbing is that these small business operators, under the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, have to place, I guess they are called power windows—over their ads to display any kind of cigarettes. I'm not really entirely opposed to that. However, what I am opposed to is the fact that in almost all of the First Nations, we have huge sales in these smoke shops. I understand that in some areas 30% to 35% of the cigarettes that are being used in specific areas are coming from these smoke shops. There are no power windows there. They advertise freely on the side of the road. There's no one controlling this whatsoever, and I think it's very unfair that we ask one group of people to cover up the cigarettes and make sure that nothing can possibly be exposed—unless you want to buy cigarettes, and then the government would get the tax on that. However, in these smoke shops that we see through some of our First Nations, I just cannot believe that we have no authority and that the government is not taking any steps to combat that.

So, when we talk about fairness, we have to go all the way with this. It's one thing to have the federal government doing one thing. We can talk about all the federal party leaders, and in a way, I guess that's what this motion is all about: It's trying to get the federal candidates, the federal leaders, to all come out in their campaigns and say what they're going to do for the province of Ontario. So far, I think it's been unsuccessful. I think Mr. McGuinty thought he had a lot more power than he actually does. The reality is that I've heard almost nothing said that would indicate that any of the party leaders, including Mr. Dion, are interested in satisfying the needs of Mr. McGuinty at this point, because he was obviously playing politics and trying to divert attention from very, very serious problems, those being the economy right here in the province of Ontario and the loss of manufacturing jobs.

I also wanted to say that we had an interesting debate on apprenticeships here in the House the other day. We talk about fairness—fairness to our young people. I can't believe that this House voted down Laurie Scott's motion, which would create a ratio system equal to the rest of Canada. If we want the federal government to be fair to the province of Ontario, shouldn't we at least be fair to our own apprentices and allow them to be the way they are in the rest of Canada?

Interjection.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Yes, I can handle heckling, but not when I can't hear myself think.

I found very, very disturbing, in this House, that here's the government saying, "Well, let's treat Ontario like the rest of Canada." Then let's treat Ontario's apprentices like the rest of Canada's. That was an area I wanted to just mention very briefly.

I want to also zero in on, I thought, a really outstanding article the other day, and I want to put it on the record. It's by Linda Leatherdale, the money editor from the Toronto Sun. I want to read her article into the record—I think I've got enough time to do that. The article is called, "Wake Up, McGuinty; Premier Seems to have No Plan to Pull Us Out of our Tailspin."

"US bailout or not, a fierce financial tsunami is building and sooner or later will hit Ontario—a province already struggling and this week hit with more blows."

"News that PPG Canada is closing two of its plants—one in Mississauga, the other in Owen Sound—shocked 320 workers who will lose their jobs and sparked howls of complaints that Premier Dalton McGuinty isn't doing enough to keep business here."

"His policies are scaring jobs away. He's the head of the biggest province in the country, and if he doesn't get off his butt, there won't be any manufacturing left," complained Jean-Paul Tombu, who's worked at the 880 Avonhead Rd. plant in Mississauga for 19 years.

"Tombu, who turns 55 this year and fears he won't be able to find another good-paying job, was particularly critical about McGuinty's energy policies. 'If he doesn't do something about these high electricity prices, he might as well kiss the province goodbye. He's killing manufacturing, and service sector jobs are not going keep this province afloat.'"

"What Tombu doesn't understand is how US President George Bush can bail out Wall Street with a \$700-billion US rescue package—yet McGuinty won't reinstate a cap on electricity prices, after breaking an election promise that caps would stay."

"Jeremy Neuhart, a spokesman for US parent firm PPG Industries, confirmed the two plants are closing, effective early 2009, with the work being moved to plants in the US. The Owen Sound plant, which employs 170, produces glass for both the automotive and residential real estate markets; and the Mississauga plant employs 150 and produces automotive paint coatings. PPG operates eight other plants in Canada."

"Neuhart blamed the closures on a slump in the automotive and housing sectors, plus restructuring as the firm put more focus on specialty products. A production line at an Illinois plant that produces glass will also be idled, he said."

"Meanwhile, Ottawa-based Allen-Vanguard Corp. also announced job cuts. The manufacturer of hi-tech security equipment will lay off 102 or 15% of its staff."

"Bottom line is Ontario job casualties are piling sky high, with 228,000 lost manufacturing jobs since 2004 and 16,300 agricultural jobs. But while the private sector sheds jobs, Queen's Park has been on a hiring spree, with

42,100 new public sector jobs since the October 2007 election." That's 42,100.

"And while Ontario bleeds, other provinces are poaching out our workers."

"Next week, Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall will be in town with 50 employers in tow, seeking to fill positions—likely apprenticeship positions. "Wall will speak at the National Job Fair and Training Expo at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre on Tuesday at 10:30 a.m. And at a barbecue on Monday night at ET Seaton Park in Thornhill, his Employment and Labour Minister Rob Norris will be luring high-skilled immigrants who can't find jobs in Ontario to Saskatchewan."

"What a sad statement when provinces like BC, Alberta and Saskatchewan chase our workers for jobs," said Conservative leader John Tory. Last week, Tory staged an economic summit where business, labour and academic leaders urged a business-better climate and an overhaul of the Liberals' flawed skilled labour program."

"This government is a wrecking crew using excessive taxation, excessive regulation and a bad attitude," said Tory.

"On Tuesday, I'll also be speaking at the Job Fair. My time slot is 3 to 4 p.m. See you there." That's when Ms. Leatherdale will be speaking.

0920

All I'm really trying to say here is that we have people from the media and from other provinces—leaders of other provinces—all identifying the problems happening here in Ontario, and our Premier seems to be zeroing in on one thing; that is, trying to blame the federal government once again, this time trying to drag all the political parties into the argument to see what they'll do for Ontario. But I think what we really have to do is make people feel welcome in Ontario—get rid of the red tape, get rid of the bureaucracy that surrounds people wanting to start jobs and start to create investment in Ontario—and I don't think that's happening."

I talked to a firm in my riding just a couple of weeks ago, and they told me that they just don't feel welcome in Ontario anymore. It's a sad experience when people who have 500 or 600 employees feel they're not welcome in this province. Of course, it's not only Saskatchewan and Alberta that are luring our workers and employers away; it's also, now, a number of the states: Tennessee, for example, and North Carolina. And do you know what? I think the one thing I'm hearing more than anything is that they don't feel welcome here anymore. Someone goes in to do some inspection in their building and shuts the plant down for a few days or charges them huge fines for something that seems kind of frivolous, and they wonder, "Why am I even here? Why am I trying to invest? Why am I trying to create an economy here in Ontario when other people in other countries and other jurisdictions would welcome me?"

Although this is a bit of a fluff resolution, and I don't for one second expect the government members to support the amendment, the reality is that we've got a government here that really doesn't care a lot about who is

hired here. They've been riding a strong economy created by the previous government—that's plain and simple; we all know that—and we're sadly watching our economy deteriorate. Mr. McGuinty is looking for anyone to blame, and of course it's a good opportunity, with a federal election coming on, to try to get some publicity for himself and blame the federal government. I don't think the people of Ontario are buying that; I don't think the people of Canada will buy that either, because you have to realize that the rest of Canada is doing very well.

I appreciate this opportunity to speak this morning, and I look forward to the vote.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: It's a privilege and a pleasure to rise in the debate today and speak about this fairness for Ontario motion that was filed by the Premier and the government opposite. In doing a little bit of research on this matter, one has to go back to Hansard to see, I guess, the strange set of circumstances over the last couple of years when the Liberal government was very much in favour of what the Conservative government in Ottawa was doing. I need look no further, for the first quote, than the then finance minister, Mr. Sorbara, who rose in this House in his budget speech of 2007 and said the following: "It was the Premier who took on this issue, and it was the Premier who negotiated the greatest improvement to fiscal fairness since the era of Lester Pearson and John Robarts. In recent weeks, we have reached agreement on federal funding for the environment and for public transit. That agreement is evidence ... that when governments work together, we ... make real progress"—again, Greg Sorbara, budget speech of 2007.

I remember standing in this House as finance critic for the New Democratic Party and referring to Mr. Sorbara and Mr. Flaherty, his federal counterpart, as the Tweedledum and Tweedledee of Canadian politics, because they were both speaking from the same songbook and saying the very same thing. They were both full of self-congratulation on how one side was listening to the other and in turn being listened to. The reality is, if Mr. Sorbara was correct at that time—and I'm not going to ever say he was not—that an accord was reached. The government in Ottawa did listen. Mr. Sorbara and Mr. McGuinty were both very proud of the accomplishments of that day.

Then we have a motion here today which completely belies the statement of only 18 months ago.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: His hypocrisy is coming to light.

Mr. Michael Prue: I would not use that word.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It may not be parliamentary.

Mr. Michael Prue: It is not.

Then I did some more research, and here's another really good quote. This time it's from Mr. McGuinty—March 7, 2007—which was also around the time of the same budget: "Since we like to lay claim to the fact that Ontario is both the heart of Canada and the economic engine of Canada, this is certainly ... a great day for Canada. It's a great day for our environment and our

economy. It's a great day, as well, for Ontario's fight for fairness."

Premier McGuinty, 18 months ago, stood in this very House, talked in glowing terms about the federal government and how the federal government was being fair to Ontario, and took kudos all around, especially from his Liberal colleagues, for the magnificent job he had done in promoting fairness. And here we have again a motion before this House saying quite the opposite.

I don't know what has transpired in that time frame, other than the economy has worsened, other than this government has failed to do, I think, what has been necessary to protect jobs and to protect the economic prospects of ordinary Ontarians.

The final quote, again from the Premier: "Absolutely nothing can cool the warm enthusiasm we all share today." He was talking, again, about his negotiations with the Harper government and particularly his negotiations with federal Finance Minister Flaherty.

We have, then, a motion before us where the Premier is saying to ignore what he has said before, to ignore the negotiations that took place before, to ignore the détente that was agreed to and the financial remuneration that flowed to Ontario, and instead, he has a list of some six requirements that he believes are necessary for Ontario to lay claim to monies that he believes are owing to us.

I would like to talk, first, about the employment insurance. It is absolutely true that workers in Ontario receive less employment insurance than workers in other provinces. No one could deny that. It is true that in provinces like Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, where the employment rates are much lower than in Ontario, people generally are able to qualify and to get more monies than they are in Ontario when they find themselves unemployed. One has to question how this has happened. Is Ottawa asleep at the switch or did Ottawa plan to do this all along? I have to suggest that this was planned a long time ago and it is not the Harper government that did it. It was Paul Martin, when he was finance minister, who accomplished all of this. I didn't hear any Liberals in those days standing up and saying, "Paul Martin is wrong." I didn't hear any Liberals saying, "We have to debate this in the House, and we have to seek fairness for Ontario workers."

What has happened has been a travesty to the people of Ontario. What has happened, because of Paul Martin and the federal Liberals and the government before this one, is that people who are on employment insurance in Ontario used to qualify in great numbers. When you found yourself unemployed, you used to be able to apply, and about 80% of the people who found themselves unemployed qualified for the benefits into which they had paid over the course, sometimes, of a lifetime. When a factory shut down or when one got laid off or when work was no longer available, then there was this social safety net available, and 80% of the people qualified.

Today in Ontario, only 40% of the people qualify and one has to ask how this happened. Did this happen because the Conservative government in Ottawa did some

horrible thing? No, they haven't changed the rule at all. What has happened is that Paul Martin's legacy has finally kicked in and people today in Ontario are hugely disadvantaged.

0930

I haven't heard the Premier talk about this. I haven't heard him say why all of a sudden it's important when it wasn't important before, save and except there are a lot more unemployed Ontarians today; save and except there are a lot more factories shutting down today; save and except there are a lot more jobs being transferred south of the border, and even south of that one, to Mexico. That's the reality of what happened.

We have to look at the reduced benefits. Benefits have actually been reduced, and again that is the legacy of Paul Martin and what he did when he was finance minister.

Look at who is being hurt the most. Who is being hurt the most? It is primarily women and new immigrants. They are the ones who are suffering the most under this employment insurance scheme. One only has to look at the statistics for Ontario and one will see exactly who is suffering. If one was fortunate enough to have been born here, then you will see that 31% of people who were born in Canada qualify for employment insurance, versus 23% of those who have recently come to Canada. So only 23% of the population who have recently come to Canada can qualify. And it's even harder upon women, and, I presume, because of the two statistics, immigrant women: 30% of women qualify for employment insurance but only 19% of immigrant women do. So they are being hugely hurt by this, and this needs to be redressed.

The motion should read not only that Ontarians should be getting more money but that we should seek to look at the imbalance whereby people who have recently arrived in this country are paying employment insurance but are not receiving it.

The Premier went on to talk about fairness in transfers, and I agree with fairness in transfers. I have agreed, as an Ontarian, my entire life and I agree today that we need to transfer funds to those areas of the country that are not as well off as Ontario once was.

We have a whole fiscal policy in effect where money would flow to places like the Maritimes, where money would flow to rural Saskatchewan or to areas where employment was not as high and where the economy was not as good. It's an important thing about being a Canadian. I am proud to be a Canadian, and I am proud of the fact that money went from this province to other provinces which were not as well off.

The whole question comes down to this: Are we as well off today? We are certainly not as well off as Alberta, with the giant oil sands and the booming economy. We are not as well off as Saskatchewan. We are probably not as well off as British Columbia. The question has to be asked: Can those transfers continue, or should those transfers be continuing? That is a question, I think, for another day. The Premier is right to make the point that the transfers need to be looked at, and in fact they will be

looked at. The question comes down to when, and it's probably 2010, by which time it will be clear whether the Ontario economy has improved or not improved, whether we are a have or a have-not province. I'm not sure that there's much sense in debating it today. The reality of the situation will become abundantly clear as this economy changes.

It is up to this government to ensure that we remain a have province. It is up to this government to put in the fiscal framework and the financial incentives to lure businesses to this province, to keep businesses in this province and to keep people working. I hear precious little from the government on this, even though I come here every day. I hear precious little about everything except their five-point plan, which does not appear to be working.

I look at economic development. They're talking about Ontario as the only place that doesn't have economic development. I would state categorically: Whose fault is that? Is it the federal government's fault that we don't have a good economic development plan in southern Ontario, or is it the government of Ontario's fault? The McGuinty government has been here for five years, and I have yet to see an economic plan. When any discussion or talk takes place about a jobs commissioner, about industrial hydro rates, about manufacturing tax credits or any other plan that is brought forward in this House, it is all pooh-poohed.

The government says, "We're not going to do that." But I haven't seen any economic plan whatsoever coming from their lips that is producing any jobs, that is keeping any jobs, that is helping the people of this province. And yes, it's very easy to blame the federal government, but I think the government should look at itself very long and hard in the mirror to try to determine whether or not it is doing everything that is necessary for jobs.

I also want to talk about fairness, because this whole thing presupposes fairness. Ontario is not being treated fairly, and I would think that that's a pretty reasonable argument given the circumstances. But how is Ontario treating cities and towns? With absolutely anything but fairness. Let's criticize the federal government because they're not flowing money to us, but let's not talk about the fact that we're not flowing money to cities and towns across this province in a way that will make a long and substantial and sustaining difference.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: One point one billion, Michael.

Mr. Michael Prue: My friend here likes to mouth off a little bit about \$1.1 billion, one-time-only funding, which every single person at the AMO conference, every single mayor and reeve and councillor has said—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: Well, of course they'll take the money, but they were also told by the Premier there won't be any money next year. You forget that, my friend from Northumberland, who likes to talk of things he doesn't know anything about. He likes to mouth off about things of which he knows nothing. He likes to say

I'm wrong when he doesn't even have the courage himself to stand up and speak on this issue.

Interjections.

Mr. Michael Prue: Madam Speaker, I can see the peanut gallery is going full-rung here.

They talk about a big plan, but they're very paternalistic to towns and cities. They talk about uploading the download, but do they do it? Of course they don't do it.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Michael, ambulance, child care—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Member for Quinte West, please come to order.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was wondering when you would intervene on the rudeness of this member.

They talk about uploading the download but the reality is they haven't done it. This member talks about ambulance services, but the reality is that five years ago the cities did an in-depth study and said that there was a \$3.2-billion download. Today, they've done the self-same study and it's a \$3.8-billion download because this Liberal government hasn't done anything except tinker around the edges. All they're ever good at is tinkering around the edges. Cities and towns across this province are starting to implode. They are starting not to be able to do things they need to do, like safe water. They are starting not to be able to fill the potholes, fix the infrastructure. It is simply not happening.

I know they're all going to be thankful for \$1.1-billion one-time funding this year. They're all going to stand up and say it's a good thing, but if we're talking about fairness for towns and cities, it can't be a one-time-only. I'm sure the Liberals would not be happy if it was one-time-only from the federal government for one year and next year you're not going to get anything. That's not the kind of fairness you're looking for from the federal government, nor is it the kind of fairness that we should be giving to the cities and towns.

This government needs to make a commitment, if it is to be taken seriously in Ottawa, to upload that download, because when I hear the finance ministers and the Conservatives in Ottawa talking about Ontario, they say the reason that our property taxes are so high, and rightly so, is because we are the only jurisdiction in this country that remains with downloaded services on the backs of property taxpayers—things like daycare, things like Ontario Works, things like social housing and, yes, even to this day, 50% for ambulance services and public health. These are all provincial matters, and the cities are also seeking tax fairness.

The result, of course, in the end, is the besieged taxpayers and the reality that they must endure. Property taxpayers in Ontario pay the highest rates of property taxes in the entire world. Is that fair? I don't think that's fair. Is this government doing anything about it? Not a whit. If this government is to really want us to believe that they are seeking fairness, then they have to seek fairness for others over whom they have some control. Part of that is to upload the download, and part of that is to give the cities the necessary tools to find alternative

sources of funding to the property tax. This government has chosen not to do it; this government has run and hidden away from that; this government, before the last election, refused to even let the property taxes debate come before this House and simply froze the MPAC statements until after the election.

0940

This week and next week, people across this entire province are going to get their house assessments. People across the province are going to find out how much the value of their house enhanced the likelihood of how much taxes are going to increase—taxes that are too, too high, taxes that are impossible and taxes without which cities and towns will not be able to function. It all comes back to this government. They talk about the fairness that they expect from Ottawa, but they don't deliver the fairness that ordinary Ontarians need in their cities and towns.

I believe in fairness, and I believe that we have to ask that Ottawa do the right thing by Ontario. We need to do what is necessary to get economic development in this province. We need to do what is necessary to put people back to work in this province. We need to do what is necessary to change the laws for employment insurance, health and other things so that Ontarians are treated the same as others. But I am also a very proud Canadian who wants to share. I want to share, as Ontario has done throughout my entire life, with those provinces that do not have enough. As a proud Ontarian, I want to do the right things by our cities and towns, to share with them, because they are in far worse financial shape than the government of Ontario. They are struggling to make ends meet. One need go to almost any place in this province and see that there is a malaise out there, that it is difficult for the mayors and councillors and reeves to deliver the kinds of services that the people expect. It is impossible for them to build the infrastructure, to maintain the infrastructure, to fill the potholes, to have clean drinking water, to staff the libraries and to do the thousand things that municipalities need to do.

If it comes down to fairness, I will support this motion for Ontario. I expect the government of Ontario to do the right thing by giving fairness to the people in our cities and towns.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I must say I'm intrigued that the Premier's brought forward this motion, fairness for Ontario. Believe it or not, the Premier doesn't speak on a lot of bills and motions that we bring forward in the House. So it intrigues me that no member of his caucus has chosen to speak on this. For an issue that is so important that the Premier of Ontario has brought it forward in the form of a resolution, the members of the Liberal Party who are listening to the debate today have chosen not to participate.

I want to continue on the theme that the member from Beaches–East York raised about the fairness to, what I would call in the provincial Legislature, our stakeholders,

and that would be the hospitals, the municipalities, the school boards—the people whom we directly serve in our role as members of provincial Parliament—because if we're going to go with hat in hand to the federal government and demand that they treat us fairly, I think it is only reasonable to assume that the people whom we serve directly, through our legislation, would be afforded the same courtesy.

As a member who is representing primarily a rural and small urban centre riding, I'm going to start with the gas tax revenue, because we are, for lack of a better word, getting shafted on the current breakdown. Essentially, the gas tax that the Ontario government is collecting is going only to municipalities that have public transit. And while public transit is an important part of our transportation infrastructure, it is not the only part. I am speaking, of course, from a rural view of our roads and bridges, which are in need of repair and are also a very important part of the infrastructure that Ontario taxpayers quite frankly deserve and expect to have their provincial and municipal governments maintain.

The federal government, in its most recent budget, implemented the gas tax fund, which helps to build communities by providing predictable funding. I would like to underline the word “predictable,” because while one-off announcements are welcome and appreciated, they make it very difficult for our municipal partners to plan how they're going to replace and repair infrastructure and how they're going to build new infrastructure that they need as new populations come in. The federal gas tax fund helps to build communities by providing predictable funding in support of municipal infrastructure that enhances the environment and quality of life. Furthermore, it benefits communities by providing funding to increase the capacity of communities to undertake long-term planning.

The refrain I often hear from taxpayers, particularly ones who are managing homes and businesses is: “Why doesn't government do a better job of planning? Government has to know that we are going to have an increase in population. It has to know we're going to have children in an area who need to be educated or that a community that is expanding is going to need hospital beds. Why doesn't the government do a better job of planning?”

I can tell you that one of the reasons municipal governments struggle with it is because of these one-off announcements we like to do—let's call it the AMO Gimme—where the Premier stands up once a year at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario annual conference at the end of August and announces the next great treat he is providing to the municipal partners. I think that if we truly respect what our municipal partners are trying to do when they are planning our communities and building our communities, we would give them some continuity and some ability to know what to expect from the provincial government.

I was actually quite pleased that our colleague in the PC caucus John Yakabuski, the member from Renfrew—

Nipissing—Pembroke, raised this in a resolution in the spring. You may remember that the resolution was, why can't we use provincial gas tax dollars in all municipalities across Ontario? Do it as a per capita assessment, but essentially say, “We trust you, municipal partners, to know what your priorities should be in terms of infrastructure, and we will give you the gas taxes in order to do that.”

Because there isn't a member among us who knows how much the price of gas is hurting us, both in our pocketbooks and in our communities as we decide what jobs to take and where we can go—yet, as municipal governments, they don't have the ability. Let's face it: The vast majority of people assume that if it's called a gas tax, it's going to go toward transportation infrastructure. It's not. Some \$2.3 billion dollars is being collected, and the government is using it for whatever they deem to be the issue of the day. I think the municipalities would appreciate, and taxpayers would assume, that taxes collected under the guise of a gas tax would actually be used for transportation infrastructure and not picking and choosing—cherry-picking—which municipalities get to have it.

0950

The other thing I'd like to speak on is fairness when it comes to our health care sector. Again, I'm looking at it from the lens of Dufferin—Caledon. We happen to be in the Central West LHIN. The local health integration network prepared a study, and basically, the study talked about all of the different health care services people would expect to receive within their community. They rated us and the services that we get in Dufferin—Caledon compared to the other LHINs across the province. Unfortunately, it was not a pretty picture. For mental health, we rate 14 out of 14: 14th in the province because we are given less money from the provincial government than any other LHIN across Ontario.

Again, the average Ontario taxpayer would assume that their provincial government would say, “If you live in Oakville, if you live in Orangeville, if you live in Sudbury, you deserve the same level of care.” It's not happening. I see it every day; I hear about it every week in my community, as people are either asked to go to other parts of the province to get the care, or worse, told, “You have to be on a waiting list because in the Central West LHIN, we don't have enough services, we don't have enough beds, and we don't have enough practitioners to assist you at this point.” In mental health, most dramatically, you are talking about people who are in crisis. You are talking about family members who are being asked to travel two and three hours to assist in the treatment. It's unreasonable and unfair that that unfairness is continuing under the provincial Liberals.

Community care access: Again, that's where we like to say, “You're going to be healthier, and you're going to get healthier faster, if you can recover in your own home. And we, the government, are going to assist you by bringing in health care professionals to assist in your recovery.” Community care access centre serving Duf-

ferin and Caledon—I'm getting calls every week, "My services are being cut." It's not because the professionals are not there to service them; it's because the provincial government has said that community care access centres across Ontario are not equally funded based on per capita. I don't understand it. I don't know how you can justify it when, again, we say we're supposed to have the ability, no matter where we live in Ontario, to expect a level of service. We're not getting it. We're not getting it with mental health, and we're not getting it with community care access centres.

I guess what I'd like to follow up on is the fairness for Ontario motion and how it relates to what's happening on the street now. When I talk and when I have meetings in Dufferin-Caledon, the number one issue that people raise with me is, "What is the provincial government doing to ensure that our economy bounces back? What is the provincial government doing to assist our economy in moving forward in the years to come?" Because anybody who reads a newspaper, anybody who turns on a television understands that there are many, many factors coming from either across the border or internationally that we cannot influence. However, there are many that the provincial government can assist with.

There's an excellent article, which I hope the members take some time to read, in the *Globe and Mail* today, from Don Drummond. He talks about how we have to move to a new Ontario and look at the economy in a different way, take some of our blinders off on how we've been dealing with things in the last 50 years and move forward. He raises some excellent suggestions on what the provincial government can actually do. Because I think we all acknowledge that the provincial government isn't the panacea and cannot solve the world's crises; we can't put a wall up around the borders of Ontario and assume that we're going to live in a magical land. However, there are things, in terms of the education rate and high school dropouts, in terms of the capital tax, in terms of the taxation system generally, that we could proactively be debating and proactively be bringing forward and discussing in the legislative forums, instead of simply pointing to the federal government and saying, "We'd like more money, sir."

I think that when I was elected and when all of the members of the House were elected, they assumed that we were going to do more than simply point fingers and hold out our hands for money. They assumed that we were going to use our collective intelligence and our collective experiences that we bring to this chamber and actually come forward with some solutions. If we can listen to the Don Drummonds of the world and the experts who are in the field and actually dealing with these issues on a daily basis, then so be it.

I don't understand why the only thing that the Premier has deemed valuable enough to speak of on this motion is to say, "The federal government has to treat us better." Maybe next week the Premier could come back into this chamber and say, "Here are the five or 10 points that we're going to bring forward in the next legislative

session that deal with shoring up our economy, that deal with encouraging manufacturing in Ontario, that deal with actually speaking to the people who are generating jobs in Ontario," and say, "This is how we're going to ensure Ontario's success for the next five or 10 years." I don't see that, and it disturbs me that we haven't moved beyond the finger-pointing and we are instead going to talk about, "Well, they didn't do the right thing, so we're just going to yell and cry in our soup," I guess. I don't know.

The people of Ontario, the taxpayers of Ontario, deserve more than an exercise in and a motion on finger-pointing. I would hope that next week and the week after, we will start to see some of those proactive, engaged, interested initiatives coming forward from the government benches that will actually bring some hope to the economy, to the taxpayers and to the families of Ontario.

I appreciate your time.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. Further debate?

Seeing no further debate, Mr. Shurman has moved that the government motion be amended by adding the following point at the end: "fairness in Ontario's taxation policies so that people already overburdened by taxes in this province are not subjected to the proposed carbon tax."

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

I believe the nays have it.

Pursuant to standing order 9(d), the vote on the amendment to the main motion is deferred—and the main motion, in fact, itself; they are both deferred to deferred votes taking place this afternoon.

Vote deferred.

INCREASING ACCESS TO QUALIFIED HEALTH PROFESSIONALS FOR ONTARIANS ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 VISANT À ACCROÎTRE L'ACCÈS DES ONTARIENNES ET DES ONTARIENS AUX PROFESSIONNELS DE LA SANTÉ QUALIFIÉS

Resuming the debate adjourned on September, 23, 2008, on the motion for second reading of Bill 97, An Act to increase access to qualified health professionals for all Ontarians by amending the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 / Projet de loi 97, Loi visant à accroître l'accès des Ontariennes et des Ontariens aux professionnels de la santé qualifiés en modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to continue the debate on international medical graduates, Bill 97. I rise today to address this very

serious issue that I, myself, have been concerned with since being elected as the MPP for Thornhill, particularly because Thornhill is a riding where we speak, at last count, something like 145 languages. It is arguably the riding that is most diverse in this province, and therefore I'm very much concerned with the issue of what to do with international medical graduates, many of whom have come to see me personally, many of whom live in my riding and many of whom are engaged in work other than the work that they should be doing—this in the face of the vast shortage of physicians and medical personnel that we experience.

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I also rise as a resident of Ontario, concerned—and who wouldn't be—with the fact that something in the vicinity of one million Ontarians or more at this point do not have access to a family physician. Of those million-plus, over 100,000 are children. This is a situation that we cannot allow to persist.

At first blush, I was pleased to hear that the government was concerning itself with the question of international medical graduates, because where, if not within our midst, could we find a better place to look for doctors willing, ready and able to be doctors? Barriers that prevent international medical graduates, or what we call IMGs, from practising medicine in Ontario are a very serious and dangerous challenge that puts lives at risk every single day. If you don't have access to a doctor, what can you say other than that there are lives at risk? People are not being treated when they require it. This is very much an ongoing concern, as I've mentioned, to me in my riding since being elected.

I might say a word about Thornhill. Thornhill, just north of the 416, is a riding that people in this chamber and outside know to be a wealthy riding. The average household income exceeds \$100,000. Where, if not Thornhill, would you find a riding more capable, from at least a monetary perspective, to protect itself? Can you buy insurance? Can you buy your way into a medical situation that you need? The answer is no. And I might cite at this point a statistic that I carry around in my head, and that is with approximately 7% of our citizenry in Ontario lacking a personal physician or lacking access to a family doctor, Thornhill is no different. Our statistics at last count were the same as anywhere else in Ontario; approximately 7% of Thornhill residents, of my constituents, don't have access to a family doctor. So we are as affected in Thornhill as we are in any other part of Ontario.

The lack of opportunity for international medical graduates to practise medicine in Ontario means that the people of Ontario will be forced to continue to endure doctor shortages in the future unless and until the government takes serious and effective action immediately. Sadly, I don't believe that Bill 97 addresses that.

I guess that Bill 97 was the government's attempt to address this challenge, but it falls short. Bill 97 is simply a shift of responsibility or, if I may use an oft-repeated word in this chamber, a download of responsibility from

itself, from health and long-term care, to the College of Physicians and Surgeons. In fact, this bill is proof that the McGuinty Liberals either underestimate the problems facing Ontarians trying desperately to find a doctor and/or they do not take the issues raised by international medical graduates, IMGs, seriously.

Now, in my initial phase as a member of this chamber—and I'm talking about back last year, not too much away from a year ago—I made it my business to have private meetings with HealthForceOntario, with the College of Physicians and Surgeons, with the Ontario Medical Association and notably with the local health integration network, the LHIN, that serves my area. The problem is not international medical graduate certification; the problem is residency spaces, places to put people who are international medical graduates so that they can be integrated into the system. It's barely above 200. We simply can't accommodate.

I, like my colleagues, can provide examples from my riding of Thornhill of how the McGuinty government has failed the people of Ontario and failed to ensure access to physicians, and I'd like to share two particular stories because I think they're poignant. One was being approached by a pediatric specialist late of Russia—actually, late of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics—a fully trained doctor, a pediatrician who graduated and practised in eastern Europe, now living in Thornhill. And what is she doing? She's writing for a foreign-language newspaper because she still can't practise medicine. She has all of the appropriate qualifications, but she can't find a residency spot. This woman has said directly to me, "I would be happy to move to Thunder Bay. I'll move anywhere you want. I'll practise as a family practitioner. I don't need to be a pediatrician, I just want to do what I was trained to do, which is to serve people." She can't do it, and it is not going to be changed as a result of Bill 97, and that grieves me.

Here's one that's even more poignant: a surgeon from Russia, shut out of the system because of unnecessary barriers. This man's qualifications: He's a spinal surgical expert, so he has that experience. He has worked in frigid climate conditions up in Siberia. He has worked with the Russian military, so he has done in-theatre surgical work. This is a valuable individual in his 50s. How many years does he have left where he could contribute to what we need in Ontario? He went so far as to contact the Canadian military and say, "I want to practise medicine so badly, I want to practise my specialty so badly, that I am perfectly happy to be assigned to Afghanistan to do what it is I do: work in-theatre, help our soldiers." "No. Unless you're a Canadian medical graduate, we don't want you," was the answer that he was given. So what's he doing? Writing software. There's nothing wrong with writing software, but in a situation where we need physicians, how can we allow him to write software, when we're so desperate?

Madam Speaker, this is not a prop. I know props are not permitted in this chamber, but what I'm holding in my hand is the text of Bill 97. This is simply a cut-out

from the bill, the Liberal government's proposed solution to the tremendous challenge facing our residents, our health care system and our international medical graduates. This is it; that's the whole bill. I know that many IMGs, as well as members of this Legislature and Ontarians looking for a doctor, have been breathlessly awaiting government action on this issue, and we are supposed to believe that this has now happened. We're supposed to believe that this has made things change. Alas, the long-awaited moment arrives and what we all got was this little piece of paper; it means nothing. I'll read it because it's only going to take 30 seconds of my time: "It is the duty of the college to work in consultation with the minister to ensure, as a matter of public interest, that the people of Ontario have access to adequate numbers of qualified, skilled and competent regulated health professionals." That's the whole piece of legislation that we're debating here today. That's not going to solve a problem; that downloads a problem. Are Premier McGuinty and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care really suggesting that when skilled, experienced, talented foreign-trained physicians come to me to ask what the government is doing to help them meet Ontario's health care needs and share their expertise, I'm supposed to show them that piece of paper?

Do you know what these people go through? They go through their boards and their certifications, they go through a two-stream placement system, trying to find residency. If they really want to practise medicine, they go and they find their residency, and where do they go? To another province or to the United States, and they never come back. That's why thousands of people who could be practising in Ontario and serving the million people, of whom, once again, I say over 100,000 are children, are not here; they're somewhere else. This is what the McGuinty Liberals have to show after \$12 billion collected in health care premiums, dare I say, taxes: just over five lines in five years. According to my simple math, that works out to one line of legislation per year in office. Five lines that do nothing except shift the blame and shift the responsibility for solving the problem onto the Ontario College of Physicians and Surgeons—that's what you've done. Five lines, which, to the Liberal member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, who spoke to the bill last Monday, apparently constitute a comprehensive strategy.

1010

We in the opposition have learned not to expect much from the McGuinty Liberals, but we have been trying to figure out just how they could fail the people of Ontario on so many different fronts.

Health care: Just look at the fact that in the 905, per capita expenditure on health care is just above the \$700 mark, and anywhere else you go in the province—the 416, by way of example, is in the order of \$950. What a disparity that is. When is that going to be addressed?

The economy: The world is crashing around us, and Ontario, through its finance minister, will issue just a statement on our affairs in, oh, three weeks or so—maybe four weeks—at the end of October.

Safety and security: Shootings going on almost daily, and what do we hear from the other side? A ban on handguns. As far as I'm concerned, a ban on handguns exists.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Order.

Mr. Peter Shurman: So why are we talking about that? We're talking about illegal handguns that you don't want to go and get.

The mystery has been solved. The key to Liberal failure, to the piles of pointless legislation they've introduced and the ineffective, meaningless proposals they've bored us with for the past five years is the Liberal government's understanding, or lack of understanding, of the word "comprehensive."

I may not know a lot, but I know that any comprehensive strategy to solve even the most insignificant of problems requires more than five and a half lines of minuscule print, and what we are talking about today is much, much more than a minor difficulty. This is about health and about life, and if I take those two words and put them together, what I'm talking about is the personal security of the individual here in our Ontario. We're not addressing it adequately, and this bill does nothing to change that. This so-called strategy is nothing more than the government telling the college to seal a leak with chewing gum, only it doesn't even offer to provide the gum.

Perhaps the entire McGuinty cabinet should take a walk through the press galley here at Queen's Park and ask one of the journalists for the definition of the word "comprehensive." What does "comprehensive" mean? It's top to bottom and bottom to top, and they don't understand it. As the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore admitted last Monday, the problem of opening access to our health care system for international medical graduates is one we've been hearing about for a while. There are ways to do this, and Bill 97's download is a very minuscule aspect of this.

For example, we have been talking in this province about another college, another university, that could educate that many more medical students. We've been talking in Vaughan—in my riding of Thornhill, of which Vaughan is part—about a hospital that can't even get the \$3 million to \$5 million that is necessary for master planning. We've been talking about that since it was recommended by the LHIN last spring.

Also last Monday, the new Minister of Health and Long-Term Care—may he serve Ontario better than his predecessor—was thrilled to inform this Legislature that last week the college voted to allow doctors trained in other Canadian provinces and in the US to practise in Ontario without being subject to additional registration requirements—whoop-de-do. What a stretch. We're going to let them into Ontario. This government is proof that if you aim low, you will achieve little. That's what you do: You aim low, and you achieve little.

Creating expectations—I know all about selling. If I say I'm going to get it for you for a dollar and I get it for 90 cents, you'll love me, and if I get it for \$1.10, you'll

hate me. The other side constantly creates expectations that it can achieve. That's called low-balling. Apparently, after years of talking and debating and studying this problem, the Liberals have managed to convince the College of Physicians and Surgeons that it's okay to let doctors trained in Canada practise in Ontario without additional registration requirements. Well, can you believe that? This is a big achievement? This is the success of the so-called partnership? Maybe—by Liberal standards. So I hope you will forgive the lack of enthusiasm you're hearing from me and from my colleagues.

This is not a reason or a cause for the government to pat itself on the back but to reflect on its failure. This proves that we are years—decades—behind in what we ought to be achieving right now, and it's not the only example. I myself recently underwent surgery at Toronto Western Hospital. I know first-hand how capable our doctors, nurses and medical staff are. The quality of care they provide to patients—if you are lucky enough to be able to get to them, you get it. But how overloaded do you want our medical people to be?

Doctor shortage is not the only difficulty that Ontarians have to contend with when it comes to accessing our health care system. To illustrate, allow me to read a letter I recently received from a constituent. This letter came in last week, and there's not a word of a lie, not a joke in it:

"Hi, Peter:

"I received in the mail, about a month ago, a notice telling me I have to renew my health card with a photo version. The form advised me to call a specific" toll-free "number ... to book an appointment to get the new card....

"I have tried to book an appointment at least three times a day since I received the notice and I always get a busy signal. Of interest, the form suggests I phone between 10 and 4 Tuesday to Friday to obtain the best service. As I have been doing that, all to no avail, this leads me to wonder, if this is their best service, what is their worse service like? And, by the way, what happens on Mondays or before 10 a.m.?

"I have now received a reminder notice which suggests that 'my health coverage may be affected if I don't obtain a new card.' Well, frankly I don't know what to do. I'm busy running a small business that, you know, creates jobs; therefore, I simply cannot spend my whole day phoning to get an appointment. Yet I'm told my coverage is in danger of some unspecified type.

"Perhaps you could convince Mr. McGuinty and his merry band of 'spend it like drunken sailors' ministers to use some of that massive increase in health premiums that he imposed to hire another operator or two. It would serve two purposes:

"(a) It would help re-employ some of the unfortunate folks from the manufacturing sector who have lost their jobs due to his unwillingness to actually do anything about the tax structure for business;

"(b) It would get me a health card.

"I appreciate you're busy being a voice of reason in the Liberal wilderness in Queen's Park, but any advice you could give would be appreciated.

"Sincerely

"Peter Symons."

Thank you, Mr. Symons. I think you about summed it up.

I can predict that the Liberal response to this inquiry will start with something like, "We have a comprehensive strategy to streamline" whatever. Calling Bill 97 a solution to the barriers faced by international medical graduates is comparable to telling my constituent to just keep calling. Bill 97 is an insult. It's a slap in the face to the people of Ontario who are suffering doctor shortages, and it's a slap in the face to the trained physicians forced to work in unrelated jobs rather than utilizing their full potential in a country that was supposed to be their land of opportunity.

I want to ask, is this really the legacy of this government? Is it really what it wants to leave behind: five lines on a scrap of paper? That, and a series of bans that also claim to be comprehensive strategies. Let's see. There was a ban on carrying illegal guns in cars, which I presume was the government's version of a comprehensive strategy to ensure safety and security. There was the trans fat ban that the government probably considered as a comprehensive plan—they said so at the time—to ensure the health and safety of students in Ontario schools.

In the short period of time that I have left to speak, I'd like to leave the McGuinty government with some recommendations that would go a long way to resolving some of the challenges in the health care system and in the province in general:

(a) Put together a plan to create new medical schools;

(b) Use some of that \$12 billion in health care tax that you grabbed from people and fund a new medical school at York University;

(c) Fund the new Vaughan hospital;

(d) Follow the example of our government and increase medical spaces by at least 30%.

And finally, do yourselves and this province a big favour and stop using words you don't understand. Call a spade a spade; otherwise, the only comprehensive plan you'll be left with is an exit strategy right out of office.

1020

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: Quite a colourful and comprehensive strategy by my colleague from Thornhill. I might give him a helpful hint. In Hamilton, we have a central area where we go to get our health cards. You take a number, you sit there and you probably, within an hour, have your new health card. They also do that for your passports and other things, so I don't know why that individual is waiting for an appointment. That confuses me.

But talking about the content of the member's presentation, I agree totally. We have physicians in this province from foreign countries who are actually driving cabs. There are some problems. There could be a language barrier; they would have to take English as a second language, which is helpful, and they are working

at that. But I think the skills of these individuals are not being utilized to the fullest potential. For example, we were talking with Hamilton Health Sciences; if you recall, Madam Speaker, you were there too. We suggested that some of these physicians could be used in back-up situations in operating rooms and their expertise—learning the language as well as practising their skills in a smaller capacity. Then over a period of one or two years, they would be in full swing and practising like they did in the countries of their origin. That would be utilizing people with medical background, rather than driving a cab or working in a factory.

The Health Sciences were very interested in that and they're moving in that direction to possibly help people with that situation. That would be a positive move, and I'd like to see that implemented and pushed by the College of Physicians. But the problem is, as we all know, in the past some of these organizations have been an old boys' club and they're not open to introducing new people to the field; it's kind of protectionism. Plus we would like to see the bill cover more areas that would be beneficial to the people of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I want to keep my comments to specifics about Bill 97. I want to congratulate the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore for the hard work.

I do have to make this comment to the member for Thornhill: What a blast from the past. It's too bad that you weren't in government when your party was in government. Maybe the cuts that we experienced throughout Ontario might not have happened. But don't take my word for it. Vote to support Bill 97.

My municipality, the municipality of Kincardine, was so impressed with this bill that they decided to talk to other municipalities to find out how much support there was, and I want to tell you that they received 115 letters of support for that. So it's not only the member for Huron–Bruce talking in support; 115 municipalities agreed with the municipality of Kincardine. Why did they agree with them? They understand that it's a comprehensive strategy. They understand that we must go to our international market to fill up the gaps that the previous governments left. We've doubled the residency spots.

I have to say I'm just absolutely taken aback. The member for Thornhill, when he was out campaigning, did he not remember what his party said? They were going to cut \$2.6 billion out of health care. And then he brings forward his asks today, and I have to say—

Mr. Peter Shurman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: We never said that. We've made that point in this House before.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): —point of order. Thank you. The member for Huron–Bruce.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Thank you. We hear that, but where did they think the money would come from? So here we go again.

It's with pleasure that I support Bill 97. We know it's a comprehensive plan. Not only that, over 160 municipalities get it. It's just too bad the other side didn't get it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Bill 97, Increasing Access to Qualified Health Professionals for Ontarians Act: another Monty Pythonesque bill from this government. Contrary to what the member for Huron–Bruce said, there's no comprehensive plan here to increase health care professionals. It's just another hollow promise and all it ends up doing is downloading, as the member for Thornhill said, responsibility for dealing with physician shortages onto the College of Physicians and Surgeons and the 23 other regulatory colleges that are involved with regulating health care professionals. A million Ontarians in 2003 did not have access to a family physician; a million Ontarians still don't have access to a family physician, and this bill is going to do absolutely nothing to change that. There's nothing substantive in this bill whatsoever.

There are lots of creative suggestions that this government could have come up with, but instead it's just a big announcement. That's what it's all about. What could they have done? They could have taken up the possibility of creating a new school of medicine—it's been talked about, but of course it's not allowed for in this bill—expanding medical school spaces, and been creative, as they are in a number of universities right now, talking about having satellite campuses, trying to create medical spaces more inexpensively, but still increasing the number of medical graduates in the province of Ontario. But they didn't do that with this bill.

What about implementing a long-term physician recruitment strategy? They could have done that. Again, they decided not to. What about establishing an independent human resource planning facility for health care professionals? They could have chosen to do that, but they chose not to do that. There are so many opportunities that could have been taken up with respect to this bill to really do something to ease the physician shortage in Ontario, which, I would have to say, is particularly acute in my riding of Whitby–Oshawa, another underserved area, another area with a great university. Why can't we be creative about creating new medical care spaces? Not addressed in Bill 97—what a shame.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: To comment on the remarks by the member from Thornhill, I always listen intently to what he has to say. He does it with some panache, he does it in colourful language and, I dare say, he attempted to be quite comprehensive in his comments given the limitations at the time, the 20 minutes available to him.

He made a good point in terms of the underutilizing in our province of foreign-trained professionals, particularly physicians, and the need for us to do something about it. I believe that this bill will go part way, and I will have an opportunity myself in just a couple of minutes to comment on the bill. He made the very good point that we

need to utilize, in the best possible way, the talent of those people who choose to come to live in the province of Ontario and in Canada. It seems to me that when you uproot someone, or if you allow someone to come from his or her country with skills that are much in demand there, the least that we should be prepared to do as a society is to utilize in the same way the skills that they were using before. It seems to me passing strange that we take physicians and nurses and health care professionals out of countries, particularly in the Third World, where the demand is even much higher than it is here, and the ratio much higher between doctors and patients, and we bring them to this country and then not utilize that skill. I think the member has made some very good points.

I don't know how my colleagues in the Progressive Conservative caucus are going to vote on this bill. Obviously, it may be in need of some tweaking, and perhaps the five-point action plan which my colleague from Etobicoke-Lakeshore put together needs to be included and we need to get specific strategies incorporated into the body of the bill.

Having said that, I await my turn.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): The member from Thornhill for a response.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you to all of my colleagues for responding, including people from the government side.

There's just one wish that I would like to express, and that is that in responding to the comments that I've made—because I'm as passionate as anyone in this House on any side about having to integrate international medical graduates into our system—please don't treat us and please don't treat Ontarians as being somehow or other naive. That's what some of the comments, for example, from the member from Huron-Bruce, suggest. I thank her, but to say that this is a "blast from the past"—maybe you don't have as many international medical graduates who want to be integrated into the system in your riding as I do in mine. You don't get comprehensive when you put in five lines without a strategy that surrounds it, and you don't do anybody any good when you continually accuse our party of wanting to cut \$3 billion out of health care. That's not something we ever promulgated.

As far as other members are concerned, my colleague from Whitby-Oshawa brought positive suggestions, which I included in my discourse as well, that have to do with the HR aspect of this, the issue of bringing a new college on stream, the issue of creating trading facilities that can integrate some of these newer Canadians into our society and help some of the Canadians who have been long-suffering souls, not capable of having a doctor of their own.

As far as member for Beaches-East York is concerned, he believes along with me that we have much to do and that we do have to integrate newer Canadians into the system. That's what IMGs are. Thank you to all members for the response, and let's hope we can move forward with something that is comprehensive.

1030

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I stand to speak to this bill with perhaps a little bit of a mixed message, although I think ultimately I will support the bill as it is currently written.

There is an outstanding need for us to utilize the talents of the people who come to this country, an outstanding need for us to use their talents for the benefit of all Ontarians and to make sure that people who are struggling to try to find a family physician are given the opportunity to do so. I believe that this bill will in part answer some of that dilemma.

I want to speak about a couple of areas first, in terms of what I see as an ongoing problem. I had an opportunity on the weekend to go to the Beach Citizen of the Year award, and a new citizen was inducted. The outgoing citizen of the year, a wonderful woman by the name of Mary Christie, came up and talked to me. She talked about the difficulty her own mother is having in a long-term-care facility that is just outside the border of Beaches-East York; in fact, it's in the former municipality of Scarborough. Her mother lives in a long-term-care facility and requires some ongoing care in oncology. Her mother and the family were told that they had to go to the local LHIN. The local LHIN was supposed to come up with a way of getting her mother the services that she needed.

You can imagine the frustration that Mary Christie and the family had when the LHIN reported back that there really weren't any services that could be made available because her mother is now a resident in the former city of Scarborough, and the former city of Scarborough is part of a LHIN that extends from the border of Beaches-East York—Victoria Park—all the way out past Clarington. I don't know how far east it goes, but I do know it goes north all the way to Algonquin Park and that certainly it is the same LHIN in which my parents live, in Cardiff, Ontario, which is about a two-and-a-half-hour to three-hour drive on a good day from my own home in Beaches-East York. So it's a huge LHIN. That LHIN is not able to look after the needs of the family, my constituents in Beaches-East York, because the mother is in a long-term-care facility in the former city of Scarborough.

It is part of the overall plan that this government has in instituting only a limited number of LHINs and that the availability of some of the services—it seems bizarre to people like Mary Christie that her mother, who has lived her entire life in the Beaches-East York area, cannot now gain access to services which are readily available in the downtown Toronto LHIN; that she is not eligible and the only alternative would be to take her mother out of the long-term-care facility, where she is receiving excellent care, and to transfer her to one in the Toronto area so that those services might be made available. This is symptomatic, in my view, of what is happening in terms of health care.

This bill does a number of things—and I would like to commend the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore. That

doesn't happen very often in the Legislature, that a member of the opposition will stand up and commend a government member, but I think she has attempted to do a good job. The report is short, it is small, but she has made some key recommendations. The first one of those is the fast-tracked and simplified registration process for physicians already practising in Canada, the US or other countries with comparable health care systems. I am in agreement with that. I am in agreement that they should be fast-tracked, but I have to pose the same question, and I think it needs to be part of the record and part of the overall discussion, about the recruitment of people who come from countries where those physicians, medical practitioners, nurses or other health care professionals are in huge demand.

Madam Speaker, as you and others in this chamber will know, I spent more than 20 years working in the immigration department of Canada, at which time some five million people came forward as immigrants to this country. In those 20 years, five million people came forward with skills and abilities that they wanted to contribute.

I understand the magnet that this country is. I understand that the standard of living is very high. I understand that our social policies over many years have been such that we have wonderful things like medicare, that we have a social safety net—albeit as fragile as it is these days—that we have an opportunity for good jobs and good places in which to educate our children and ourselves, and that people want to come here. But we have recruited people, in some instances—and I think the government needs to look at this—to come when we knew full well that their skills and abilities would not be recognized when they first stepped off the plane. People would come from countries like Afghanistan or countries in the Third World or in much of sub-Saharan Africa who had skills and abilities which were hugely in demand in their own country, and they would come here not being able to use those.

You might wonder why I am posing the whole question of immigration when many people think that it is a matter of federal jurisdiction. In fact, it is not simply a matter of federal jurisdiction. Section 93 of the British North America Act and the Constitution of Canada have two joint jurisdictions: One is agriculture, which we all know very well because we have an agricultural minister here in Ontario and a federal agricultural minister as well; and the second one is immigration, and we have a Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, and as well there is one in Ottawa. But the bringing to Canada of immigrants has been left largely in this province to the federal government.

Other provinces have stepped in much more aggressively than we have been willing to do. Perhaps the most aggressive province has been Quebec. The province of Quebec, many years ago, I believe 30 or 35 years ago, developed their own grid system. They developed their own norms of assessment so that they could look at people in terms of what kind of immigrants Quebec

needed. They looked at that system in order to help to recruit and to bring people to that province that were in need and in demand, and so that the jobs were available for them to do upon arrival.

Ontario has not done that, and Ontario continues not to do that. I think that this is something where we are lagging behind. If we are clear that we want people to come to this country, if we are clear that we want people with foreign credentials to be recognized when they arrive here, if we are clear that they are going to be of benefit to this province, then I think we have to get into the immigration game. We have to do more like what the province of Quebec does and set up our own grid and/or set up visa officers in the field who will help to recruit and to explain to potential new Canadians and new Ontarians the way that the system works in Ontario.

It is not fair, and it continues not to be fair, to take people from the Third World, to take them from doing good work for people who desperately need their services, and to bring them here and not utilize those same services. It's important for those who are here already, for those who have made the choice, to fast-track them and to simplify the registration process. But it is also equally as important for new recruits that may be coming forward in the weeks and months and years in advance of now that they are given every opportunity to understand the circumstances before they are removed from one country and brought to another.

I think the whole ethics, the whole morality, of what we're doing needs to be looked at. I believe that the province of Ontario has the economic weight and the fiscal muscle to be able to accomplish this.

I know that when we were talking about fairness just a while ago, one of the issues of fairness that was raised in the past was the whole issue of immigration, immigration settlement and Ontario getting the same money as other provinces. The reality is that Quebec gets the most money not simply because the federal government wants to give money to the province of Quebec, but because they have established their own grid system and visa officers, and this is an attempt by the federal government to pay those monies in order to allow Quebec to do what it needs to do.

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I believe Ontario should go down the same road. I believe that Ontario should be out there recruiting the kinds of professionals we need. It need not be confined to medical practitioners. It can be a whole broad range of things: everything from nuclear scientists, if that's what we need, to engineers. It can be recruiting people in less glamorous jobs. If Ontario needs janitors, then let's recruit janitors. If Ontario needs teachers, let's recruit teachers. If Ontario needs people who work in factories, let's recruit those people who can work in the factories. But Ontario has not done that.

I would simply suggest that in line with this bill—and I think this bill is fine—we need to look at the ethics and the morality, and Ontario also needs to get into the immigration game if we are ultimately going to be successful.

To let some other jurisdiction, such as the federal government, choose our immigrants does not do justice to the people of Ontario, and ultimately we will be scrambling, as we are scrambling here, to do the right thing.

I also want to talk about the other aspects of this bill: creating a transitional licence to allow internationally trained physicians to practise under supervision while they complete their education. This is akin to an apprenticeship, and I have to agree that this is a good idea. I have always thought that this was the ultimate way in which internationally trained physicians and nurses and other medical practitioners should be brought into the field. They have education, sometimes comparable, sometimes better, sometimes not as good as our own.

I am reminded of a case which to this day I still find bizarre. I had a gentleman approach me who lived in my neighbourhood. He was and is a Canadian citizen. He was and is fluent in English, French and German. He was a medical practitioner in Germany, you see, because he made the mistake after he finished his pre-meds at the University of Toronto—he decided to specialize in a form of medicine which was best taught in the University of Stuttgart, I believe. He went to Germany because he was fluent in German. His parents were originally from that country. He studied until he became a doctor. He practised in Germany for a couple of years in his field, and he was internationally accredited. But when he wanted to come back to Canada, when he wanted to come back to his wife and his children who, at that point, lived in Parkview Hills in my own neighbourhood, he was not allowed to become a doctor in Canada. It seemed kind of bizarre because his father had been recruited from Germany many years before to be a doctor in Canada and ran across no problems at all. I remember him wanting to come. The first thing they made him do was take an English test. This was a person who was born in Canada, who lived his entire life in Toronto, who was educated through the public school system of the city of Toronto and of East York, who went to the University of Toronto, who was multilingual in at least three languages, and he had to wait for six months or a year in order to write the English proficiency exam. I know that's been done away with now, and thank goodness for that, but that was just one of the examples. I've lost touch with him. I don't know, because his family doesn't live there anymore, what has happened. I don't know whether he's still in Germany and frustrated that he can't come back to the land of his birth and practise medicine, and I don't know whether his family may have gone back to Germany in that same frustration, or whether he has moved on to some other place. I remember this acutely.

I think that this is symptomatic of what has happened in our province, so we need to have a transitional licence to allow people like him with all those skills and abilities to do anything from a couple of months to a year and transition into the Canadian experience. The same that holds true of that man, I'm sure, would hold true of dozens or hundreds of other people who come from far-flung jurisdictions across the world. A simple oppor-

tunity to work alongside a Canadian licensed doctor or team of doctors, either in a hospital or in general practice, and then to write the exam or to show that they have gained the necessary skills and abilities is all that should be required. I agree with this point as well.

I have about five minutes left, but I'm mindful of the time. It's about time for me to stop so I will do that and resume on the next occasion.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The time for debate has ended.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I take this opportunity on behalf of the member from Ottawa Centre to welcome a group of visitors from the Canada Meets Germany organization who are going to be visiting Queen's Park today. It's a pleasure to have them with us.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PUBLIC HEALTH

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My first question is to the Premier. Premier, my question to you is quite simple: I'd like to ask you how many full-time public health units in the province of Ontario are still without a full-time medical officer of health?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. David Caplan: Public health and the capacity of the system has been something that we've been working very hard to address. I understand there are approximately one third that still have acting medical officers of health, and it's a situation that we're working quickly to resolve.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: It is absolutely disgraceful that five years since this government came to office, one third of communities still don't have medical officers of health. You have failed to address this particular problem. As you know, this was one of the key recommendations coming out of the Walkerton report, and that is that you were supposed to hire full-time officers of health for every community in the province of Ontario. You have failed. The Ontario Medical Association twice last year reprimanded you and indicated how urgent this was in the case of a medical crisis. As of Friday, you give them more responsibility. We don't have people in place—one third vacant. How can we have confidence in your government to improve local infection control and track C. difficile—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. David Caplan: The member is incorrect. In fact, every unit has a full-time medical officer of health: Two thirds are permanent, one third are acting. We do believe

that public health units are fully equipped and able to do the very important work on mandatory reporting. The member presents incorrect information and traffics in this fiction. Unfortunately, it would be helpful to the public if the member would present correct information and the correct characterization of the situation with our public health units.

This member, in particular, is a former Minister of Health. This member was responsible, in the words of the chief medical officer of health for the province of Ontario, for turning her back on public health in the province of Ontario. The report that the member refers to refers to the tragic consequences that we see in this province when a member does not take their responsibility seriously. I can assure this member, in particular, that we have learned—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: It's obvious that this Minister of Health is not prepared to assume any responsibility for the public health and safety of people in the province of Ontario. There is an outstanding recommendation, number one, coming out of the Walkerton report. You've been there now five years. If you can't do the job and hire the medical officers of health that are needed in this province, then you better move over and give it to a third person. I can tell you there are serious gaps in the system. You've also said that you've created infection control practitioner positions, but you haven't told us how many you've actually filled. I ask you again, how can this situation give any confidence to people in the province of Ontario when it comes to C. difficile when you haven't been able to hire the people needed to track the infections and make sure people don't die?

Hon. David Caplan: I'm happy to share the information with members of the House. On Friday, in fact, we had wonderful steps that were taken that had begun under my predecessor, Minister Smitherman, under which we were able to take the next steps to protect Ontarians. We offered both opposition critics briefings by the chief medical officer of health, and I can tell you that both critics refused to take us up on those opportunities.

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I want to have a chance to share with the Legislature today that we've established the Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee, or PIDAC, staffed by some of the leading experts in our province, to be able to provide the kind of guidelines and supports that are going to be required. We are in fact the second jurisdiction now in Ontario to have public reporting, clear accountability guidelines and transparency to provide that information for Ontarians. If Ontarians go to www.Ontario.ca/patient-safety—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. New question.

C. DIFFICILE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: He mentions the briefings. Yes, if you want a last-minute briefing and you want to

make sure it's not at the convenience of the health critics, make sure you give them a time that they can't be accommodated. What a big excuse.

I would say to you, Minister, that it's becoming apparent that you're not going to assume responsibility for the health and safety of people in this province. You and your Premier should have followed the recommendations of the Peterborough Regional Health Centre report in 2004, which said you should track C. difficile deaths. Why has it taken you four and a half years to begin mandatory reporting, and why have you not followed through and aren't tracking the deaths on a monthly basis?

Hon. David Caplan: In fact, this was addressed by Dr. Michael Gardam and Dr. Michael Baker, two infectious disease and patient safety experts in the province of Ontario. Unfortunately, the member is engaging in this political gamesmanship when medical experts are saying that these are complicated and difficult matters that oftentimes people in the medical field have some debate around, that there is no consistent methodology, nor is there an ability to do so.

In fact, as the member well knows, or would have known if she had taken us up on the offer to have a briefing on this, as Dr. Baker has said, he's asked for the very best advice by Dr. Vivek Goel and many others to put this into place. In fact, what is in place are 14 regional infection control networks, 166 new infection control practitioners, and we've added to those, in fact, with more—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I think there's only one person who might be a little ignorant of the facts, and that might be the minister himself. Last week, he said to reporters —

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the member to withdraw that. Personal attacks on one another are not appropriate for the chamber.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I would withdraw that he lacks knowledge of the facts.

Last week, in responding to reporters, he indicated that his wife had told him that C. difficile had been around for a long time. The one, thing, then obviously the minister doesn't understand completely is that the strain of C. difficile in the province today, and raging throughout the world, is much more deadly than it was five, 10 and even two years ago.

So I ask you, Minister, are you prepared to acknowledge that there is a need for an investigation to find—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister?

Hon. David Caplan: I do want to correct my record as well. I did indicate both opposition members—I should say that that is not correct. My colleague from Nickel Belt did take us up on the offer to have a briefing by medical experts. This member did not. She does not because she doesn't want the facts. She does not because, unfortunately, it was her failure as a former Minister of Health that she turned her back on public health.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: That is a personal attack.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a moment, please. I recognize that in the heat of debate in here that things can get said, but we do need—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I appreciate the member from Newmarket—Aurora's comment both ways. I think we all just need to be diligent in the responses. We certainly can choose to poke fun at maybe some lack of knowledge or lack of understanding, but try and do it in a general way and not use it as a direct attack at a member. I say it from both sides. The more we can be conscious of that and maintain decorum, I think, helps this place function better.

Minister?

Hon. David Caplan: Speaker, thank you very much. I quote former chief medical officer of health Dr. Richard Schabas, who says, "This was a government"—referring to the member when she was the Minister of Health—"that really held public institutions in contempt ... [It] was contemptuous of people who worked for public institutions," and in public health. That's the record of this member when she was on this side of the House, guarding and protecting the health of the people of Ontario.

It's a very different situation now, where we've put in place protections, internationally recognized and award-winning hand-washing protocols and a hand hygiene project—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister, thank you. Final supplementary.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Mr. Speaker, I can tell you one thing. If this minister is more interested in finger pointing than protecting the health and safety of people in the province of Ontario, then he should continue day after day to stand up and do some finger pointing.

The reality is this government has been in power now for five years. The first outbreak of C. difficile was in Peterborough in the fall of 2003. Since that time, they have chosen not to assume any responsibility or any accountability. They have been totally missing in action.

People have died in this province—thousands of people, by the way—and I'm going to ask the minister again: Is he prepared to assume accountability and launch an investigation into the cause of C. difficile in order that we have a complete picture of the situation?

Hon. David Caplan: I disagree completely with the member opposite. In fact, starting in 2004, shortly after the outbreak that the member mentioned, is when action ensued by my predecessor and by this government.

I would quote for the member a recent editorial from the Belleville Intelligencer: "But playing political ping-pong with this issue is not the right road to take. To suggest the government of Premier Dalton McGuinty is afraid of an investigation of the deaths from C. difficile is crass political opportunism ... All political parties should work to ensure infection control is as stringent as it can be, without trying to score political points out of a tragic situation."

Sadly, my friend opposite doesn't take the wise advice from the good folks in Belleville. Unfortunately, she doesn't take the wise advice from right across the province of Ontario. If she were to be honest with the people of Ontario, that this government has taken the appropriate action—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the member to withdraw the comment.

Hon. David Caplan: I withdraw, Speaker. In fact—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question. The leader of the third party.

FEDERAL LIBERAL ELECTION PROMISES

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is to the Premier. Now that the federal Liberals, under Stéphane Dion, and the NDP have released their election platforms, can the Premier tell Ontario voters which platform will reverse the unfair and disastrous employment insurance cuts that have for years resulted in lower per capita employment insurance benefits for laid-off Ontario workers?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I welcome the question. I welcome the support of the leader of the NDP in our shared quest for fairness from the federal government, and I look forward to having that resolution passed—ideally unanimously—in this Legislature very soon.

We've sent letters to all the federal party leaders as well as to every single candidate presenting themselves, seeking a seat in the House of Commons, and we've said we'd like to have answers by 3 October. We'll make those answers public, but until we receive those answers, we won't know exactly where the parties stand.

I understand that many of the platforms, if not all the platforms, are now out, but we're looking for some very specific responses to some very specific questions. We have yet to receive those, and as I say, as soon as we do, we'll make them all public.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: Mr. Dion has released his election platform. It states what he's prepared to do, but the Premier somehow doesn't want to refer to it. Let me help the Premier out.

The Liberal platform of Mr. Dion only offers help for seasonal workers, a proposal that will create more inequalities and unfairness between laid-off Ontario workers and workers in the rest of the country.

The NDP is committed to making 80% of unemployed Ontario workers eligible for employment insurance, the situation that existed before employment insurance was cut by the former federal Liberal government. That's good news for Ontario workers.

My question: When will the Premier acknowledge that his federal Liberal cousins have rejected his fairness for Ontario workers campaign and won't get the job done for laid-off Ontario workers?

1100

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: —we're also understanding that the Conservatives are putting forward the position held by the federal Conservative party. I understand that as well.

What I'm trying to do is what I believe to be the responsible thing. We're trying to advocate on behalf of all Ontarians, independent of how they vote in the upcoming federal election. We're looking to see what federal parties are offering by way of addressing recurring unfairness. It is true that the NDP have spoken to this issue; it is true that the Liberals, through their platform, have spoken to this issue. But the leader of the NDP also knows that during the course of a political campaign, not only do we put out a platform, but from time to time our position is sought in response to a specific letter coming from a stakeholder group. We've done this here on behalf of 13 million Ontarians and we look forward to a specific response to issues that we have raised.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Howard Hampton: But, Premier, Mr. Dion has spoken. He has released the Liberal platform, and it will do nothing for those hundreds of thousands of laid-off workers in Ontario. But one of your other so-called fairness demands has been that the federal government address manufacturing job losses in southern Ontario by establishing an economic development agency. Hard-hit southern Ontario has been completely ignored in the 76-page Dion Liberal election platform. New Democrats are committed to creating an economic development agency for hard-hit southern Ontario.

I ask the Premier: When is the Premier going to endorse Jack Layton and the NDP as the right choice for laid-off Ontario workers?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I understand where the leader of the Ontario NDP is coming from on this score. He's very open and honest about this, and very partisan. I think what is better for us to do, certainly on this side of the House as the government, is to awaken all Ontarians, independent of how they vote in the upcoming election, to the notion of unfairness. I want to add this to the conversation that has taken place during this period of the election.

I want all Ontarians, again, independent of how they vote, to push all their candidates and ask them if they're prepared to stand up for fairness when they get to Ottawa. Are they prepared to understand that here in Ontario we're coming up short when it comes to employment insurance, infrastructure, health care and other areas? That's what this is about. It's not about—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier. New question.

FEDERAL LIBERAL ELECTION PROMISES

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is to the Premier again. The cards have been put on the table. Your

federal Liberal cousins—I think your seat mate is your brother. He's the federal MP for Ottawa South. Nowhere do they respond to those two critical things for all of these jobless Ontarians: No economic development strategy for southern Ontario and no real addressing of the employment insurance inequality. Premier, I'm asking you: Are you now going to point out these failings in Mr. Dion's federal Liberal platform and how badly they let down laid-off Ontario workers?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I really not sure what more I can add to this, except to say that again, I appreciate that the leader of the NDP is very open and honest about this. He wants all Ontario voters to vote for the NDP: open, closed, shut. I understand that.

I think we have a bit of a higher responsibility to encourage all Ontario voters to be thoughtful. The additional consideration I'd like them to weigh when it comes time to vote is, who's going to stand up for Ontario? Who's going to address employment insurance issues and infrastructure issues? Who's going to address the unfairness when it comes to health care? Who's going to give us a regional economic development plan for southern Ontario? Those are the kinds of questions that we want all Ontario voters to consider, independent of how they vote in the end.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I'm simply seeking a little honesty from the McGuinty Liberal government.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the member to withdraw the comment. We just spoke to the members about this very issue.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I withdraw that.

I'm simply asking the McGuinty government to now pay attention to the test that the McGuinty government issued.

I note that other Premiers from other provinces—for example, the Premier of Saskatchewan is here in Ontario today. He says that Ontario has a job shortage, while Saskatchewan has a worker shortage. They're looking for people to fill 10,000 jobs in Saskatchewan, while their economy is booming. He says, "Hey, I recognize there's a problem in Ontario."

I'm asking the Premier of Ontario: Do you recognize there's a problem of lost jobs in Ontario, and do you recognize that the Dion Liberal platform won't do a thing to address it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm really pleased about the developments that have been taking place of late in the province of Saskatchewan. The commodities market there is booming; they're really bringing in tremendous resources on the basis of potash, oil and uranium. That's great news for the folks of Saskatchewan. I think it's a bit of a tribute to the quality of our workforce that they're coming here.

One of the things that I would remind Ontarians to do is to keep in mind that we've got 100,000 jobs in Ontario that we can't fill. That's why we've been putting such a strong emphasis on retraining opportunities for Ontarians who have lost their jobs. I'm not about to say to On-

tarians that they can't travel elsewhere to find employment, just as I wouldn't say to the folks of Saskatchewan that they can't travel elsewhere to find employment in this great country that we share and love. But what I am saying to the people of Ontario is that we're going to continue to work as hard as we possibly can on a number of fronts, including ensuring that we receive fairness from Ottawa.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I want to bring the issue back to jobs: the loss of jobs, the fact that the Dion Liberals propose to do nothing in terms of employment insurance fairness and nothing in terms of addressing that job loss in terms of manufacturing in southern Ontario. It's happening almost daily. In Niagara this week, AbitibiBowater is temporarily shutting down its paper mill, laying off almost 500 workers.

I ask the Premier again: Since the Dion Liberals, federally, propose nothing to address this disastrous loss of manufacturing jobs in southern Ontario, when is the McGuinty government going to take some action to address this disastrous loss of manufacturing jobs in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to remind my colleague that 60% of all new jobs created in Canada since January of this year were created here in the province of Ontario. The unemployment rate today in Ontario is lower than it was five years ago. We continue to work hard and well with folks in the manufacturing sector. My friend knows that we have eliminated capital taxes for manufacturers and those in the resources sector.

He may know that I had the opportunity to visit the very plant that he referenced a moment ago when I was in Thunder Bay. I had a good opportunity to chat with some of the folks there, and there are some challenges associated with just getting access to fibre and making sure you have enough wood to do the kinds of things that they want to do there to operate their energy-efficient apparatus.

But the fact of the matter is, we continue to generate 40% of all the wealth in the country, and we continue to generate jobs more quickly than anybody else.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Regarding the comments made by the Minister of Health in the briefing, I have the proof on my BlackBerry that, yes, I was offered a briefing at 1 o'clock Thursday and then the ministry called to cancel it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. I will trust that the minister and the member will clear the air on this issue of the briefing.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Tell the truth, David.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Kitchener-Waterloo, would you please withdraw your comment?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I withdraw.

Hon. Michael Bryant: On a point of order, Speaker: I appreciate that there is obviously a time for a debate back

and forth in between question and supplementary, but I wonder about the use of points of order to provide, in essence, a rebuttal 10 minutes after the fact.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm letting the clock run because the point of order was initiated on the opposition side. I think the general consensus around this place has been that we try not to have points of order during question period, but I do, under parliamentary procedure, have to honour them.

New question.

EASTERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is for the new Minister of Economic Development. I want to congratulate him on winning his new responsibilities. I think "winning" is the right word.

Minister, in the run-up to the last provincial election, Premier McGuinty, with great fanfare, announced the eastern Ontario development fund. The Premier's press release states that applicants will know if their proposals are successful within 45 days of applying.

Minister, can you tell us how many firms or individuals have applied and how many have been successful?

Hon. Michael Bryant: I know the member will want me to provide the most up-to-date numbers, so I will certainly undertake to provide those numbers to the member.

I want to thank the member for his good wishes, so to speak, and say as well that the establishment of the fund and the strategy was very much for the purpose of recognizing the particular regional opportunities that exist in eastern Ontario, ones the member is certainly aware of. As a result of that and as a result of significant hard work by our member of provincial Parliament Jean-Marc Lalonde, we were able to use this to leverage opportunities and jobs for the purposes of making eastern Ontario an even stronger region in this province and this country.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Nice words, but I didn't hear any substance.

It's been two months now since the glitzy launch of this program. We cannot find any evidence that one business—not one business—has seen money flow. There doesn't seem to be a sense of urgency—almost lethargy, some might say—while families and communities are suffering in eastern Ontario. We have almost weekly announcements of job losses. Breadwinners have to move out of their homes and their hometowns, even their provinces, to find work. So I ask the minister to explain to us and the people of eastern Ontario why the money isn't flowing, and why isn't eastern Ontario a priority for your government?

Hon. Michael Bryant: Obviously, the eastern Ontario development fund and the \$80-million investment is just a sign of the enormous support of this government for eastern Ontario.

If the member has a particular project that he wants to work with the government on or wants to bring to the

government's attention, I appreciate that, and we'll certainly work with the member on that front.

This is the government that in fact established an eastern Ontario development fund; his was the government that cancelled the eastern Ontario development fund. In the last election, they offered to open up some kind of an office or something. So I think, from the Premier's actions, our commitment to eastern Ontario is very clear, and I think it's very clear from the member's previous government's actions—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

C. DIFFICILE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Under the new reporting system, hospitals will post the number and the rate of C. difficile infections at the end of the month following the event. That could be up to 60 days after an outbreak has been declared. You made it mandatory for hospitals to immediately report clusters or outbreaks of C. difficile to their health units, but you made it totally voluntary to report the same to their staff, their patients and their communities. Why doesn't your plan include any requirements or guidelines for immediate local public communication of C. difficile outbreaks?

Hon. David Caplan: In fact, there is a requirement through the public health unit that if there is an outbreak, it immediately be publicly reported. The member is quite incorrect in the facts that she has presented, and I hope this presents a chance for her to correct her record; she has unfortunately muddied these waters.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I did take the briefing, and this is a question I asked Dr. Williams directly. He said that it is up to the health unit or to the hospital to decide if they are going to advise the public of an outbreak. This is a question I asked directly, and I asked him, "Why don't we have guidelines? The hospital has to report to the health unit so we know that there is a cluster or an outbreak. How come there's no communication mechanism?" I was clear in this question, and he was clear in his answer to me: There is no such requirement.

Your plan for dealing with C. difficile outbreaks emphasized the importance of best practices for handwashing—you talked about that—room cleaning and proper isolation of patients. But in many Ontario hospitals, which are overcrowded and understaffed, hospital personnel do not have the time or the facilities to implement these best practices. Have you, Mr. Minister, assessed the resource implications of implementing C. difficile best practices in all 228 hospital sites that have to report?

Hon. David Caplan: In fact, when we asked Dr. Baker and Dr. Gardam to provide us with the very best advice, we also asked Dr. Vivek Goel, who is the president and CEO of the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion. He says, "In jurisdictions where

they launched into it without taking a more systemic approach," as we have done in Ontario, "they found that the estimates ... varied widely from one hospital to another." He goes on, "We're going to look at the tools which have been developed for classifying the causes of death and assemble expert panels," as Dr. Baker has, "identify and take a sample of cases from across the province, and evaluate what proportion of those cases can be attributed to C. diff."

In fact, we've taken a comprehensive approach. Quite shortly, we'll be releasing the generic output specifications which will go to the capital guidelines for hospitals on infection control practices and a whole range of other elements—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

DRAPEAU FRANCO-ONTARIEN

FRANCO-ONTARIAN FLAG

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: My question is to the minister responsible for francophone affairs.

Jeudi dernier, j'ai participé à l'inauguration de deux monuments francophones de l'est ontarien, soit à Rockland et à Casselman. Laissez-moi vous dire que c'était la journée du drapeau francophone, emblème de la communauté francophone, drapeau illustrant le courage, la solidarité et la persévérance de la communauté franco-ontarienne. Laissez-moi vous dire que plus de 2500 personnes ont assisté à ces deux inaugurations.

Je dois dire que le 21 avril 2001, les trois partis de cette Chambre, de cette Assemblée législative, ont accepté à l'unanimité la reconnaissance du drapeau franco-ontarien.

Madame la ministre, qu'a fait le gouvernement pour assurer l'épanouissement et le développement—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Je voudrais remercier mon collègue de Prescott-Russell pour son engagement envers la communauté francophone. Je vais être très claire ici aujourd'hui : les membres de ce gouvernement appuient la communauté franco-ontarienne.

J'étais très déçue la semaine dernière, lorsqu'on fêtait le 33^e anniversaire du drapeau franco-ontarien, que le député de Thornhill s'est levé pour insulter les Franco-Ontariens, pour dire—il parlait du drapeau franco-ontarien—« to divide our great Ontarian community. »

Alors, je voudrais lui rafraîchir la mémoire : C'est son parti, lorsqu'il était au gouvernement, qui a divisé cette communauté-là. C'est son parti qui a voulu fermer l'Hôpital Montfort. C'est son parti qui a réduit le nombre de personnel et le financement de l'Office des affaires francophones. C'est son parti qui divise la communauté de l'Ontario. Nous, les—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Merci. Supplementary?

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: Il n'y a pas de doute que les commentaires faits par l'opposition conservatrice la

semaine dernière étaient insultants à l'égard des membres de la communauté francophone, qui croit au respect et à l'égalité.

Lorsque j'ai lu dans le journal *Le Droit* d'Ottawa les commentaires de mon collègue de l'opposition, je ne pouvais pas y croire de mes yeux. Un commentaire comme celui qu'a fait le député de Thornhill est irrespectueux, inutile, et met la population mal à l'aise.

Je m'interroge : « Où est la direction du Parti conservateur? » Le français est devenu la langue de la justice et de l'éducation, et il occupe une place importante dans certaines municipalités et dans différents domaines.

Madame la ministre, que diriez-vous aux francophones pour corriger les dommages causés par les propos insultants de l'opposition, et je—

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The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Merci. Minister?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Oui, je dirais à la communauté franco-ontarienne que ce gouvernement ici a toujours été en arrière d'eux pour les appuyer. C'est ce gouvernement qui a donné 185 \$ millions pour reconstruire l'Hôpital Montfort. C'est ce gouvernement qui investit dans l'éducation franco-ontarienne. C'est ce gouvernement qui est toujours en arrière d'eux dans leurs luttes et dans leur succès.

Ce n'est pas le drapeau franco-ontarien qui divise; ce sont des commentaires comme ceux du député de Thornhill.

Again, I'm asking John Tory and the member from Thornhill, would you stand up today and apologize and admit that your comments were disrespectful and divisive? I ask for an apology today.

Le drapeau franco-ontarien, comme le dirait ce grand poète, renferme dans ses plis l'espoir de tout un peuple.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question.

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ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is for the Premier. "Go west, young man, go west." That is the message today being heard at Toronto's national job fair. Saskatchewan's Premier, Brad Wall, is visiting to poach Ontario's coveted workforce. I don't blame him. Ontario workers are some of the best in the world. The Premier loves to boast about his retraining programs, but what is the point of retraining workers when there are no jobs? We need it both ways, Premier.

The Premier will probably say that he has a five-point plan. Well, that plan is not working, Premier; it's clearly unbalanced. Before anything else, we need to retain and attract investment. In order to save and create jobs, we need a competitive business environment.

Premier, will you adjust your so-called plan, or are you simply going to stand on the platform and wave goodbye to Ontario's workers as they fade into the sunset?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty, Premier: To the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Michael Bryant: Well, on the contrary, it is in fact the case that it is Ontario that the government of Saskatchewan is coming to, to try and attract jobs, and that is thanks to the investments and interventions and the climate that has been created by the government through its investments in education and post-secondary education and skills, and with respect to advanced manufacturing and second-generation jobs.

Certainly, there are also great opportunities that exist between Ontario and Saskatchewan, such that Ontario would become part of a supply chain, and potentially, Saskatchewan companies would become part of a supply chain, as Ontario workers and businesses meet the needs of Saskatchewan. As far as I'm concerned, that kind of partnership would simply be a win-win for the people of Ontario and the people of Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I've never thought of Ontario as being a supply chain for employment for Saskatchewan.

Premier, the United States had a crisis last week, a crisis in their financial markets. They knuckled down, they worked the entire weekend and they came up with a solution. Within four or five days they came up with a solution, with a program that they are implementing and that has a good opportunity of working. What has Ontario done? We have a crisis of equal proportion, and yet this province, this government, has done nothing to help solve the crisis that Ontario finds itself in. Ontario is bleeding. We are bleeding jobs and we're bleeding our best citizens west. What is this government going to do to solve that issue?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Municipal Affairs, withdraw the comment, please.

Hon. Jim Watson: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Michael Bryant: With all due respect, I'm not sure the member is willing to accept the fact that Ontario companies are part of a global supply chain. Surely the member would not want us to reach out internationally to be a part of the supply chain through high knowledge and high-quality manufacturing and services jobs internationally, and not also reach out nationally.

I know that Minister Papatello, the Minister of International Trade, will be doing that work internationally, and just as we will build on the success of our agreement with Alberta, we want to in fact create even more linkages between Saskatchewan businesses and Ontario businesses, because that will mean more Ontario jobs, more Ontario products and more Ontario prosperity.

If that party is against that, that's fine, but this government is in favour of that.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. The minister has repeatedly refused to order a separate inquest into the March 2006 killing of eight-year-old Jared

Osidacz. Instead, he has backed the corner's joint inquest that considers Jared's killing as part of a mandatory inquest into the police shooting death of his murderous father, who had a history of domestic violence. That joint inquest was supposed to begin on October 6 but has collapsed in disarray. Isn't now a good time for this minister to order the coroner to hold a stand-alone inquest into Jared's death and ensure that all the relevant facts in this case come to light?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to thank the member for the question. There isn't anyone in this House who can only imagine the pain that this mother and this grandfather must be experiencing.

Obviously, the presiding coroner decides when the inquest is going to move forward. For a variety of reasons, he has decided to postpone the inquest. I know that he and the chief coroner understand the importance of this inquest to the family, and I'm sure they will be moving expeditiously to ensure that this inquest gets under way as quickly as possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The minister has previously assured this House that the long-awaited joint inquest would be comprehensive and thorough, and would probe all the facts that led to Jared being murdered, would answer all the questions his grieving mother and grandparents want answered. But the coroner won't allow crucial evidence from 2002 to be heard about the perpetration of domestic violence and the warnings that said Jared's life was likely at risk. Now that the joint inquest is on hold, the minister knows very well that he has powers under section 22 and can order the coroner to hold a separate inquest for Jared with a focus on preventing innocent children from being murdered by perpetrators of domestic violence. Why won't he do that?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Listen, I'm not going to presuppose, and I don't think that any member in this House should presuppose, the findings or the recommendations that the inquest will bring about. I am hopeful, as I think we all are hopeful, that the questions the mother and the grandfather have will be addressed and will be answered in the inquest. That's the wish of every member in this House; there is absolutely no question. I think it would be inappropriate to presuppose the findings. There is a system in place, that system has integrity attached to it, and I look forward to the recommendations. Hopefully, there will be some type of closure for that mother and that grandfather.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Charles Sousa: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Recently, PPG, a company that operates an auto paint plant in my riding of Mississauga South, announced that they will be closing their Clarkson facility in the second quarter of 2009. This means that 150 people in my riding will soon be facing

unemployment. This news came as a shock to the employees and their families. PPG has cited what has become a common challenge, the decline in the North American automotive market and a decrease in demand for their product, as the reason for the decision to close the plant.

While we understand that high fuel prices, a high Canadian dollar and a slumping US economy all play a role in the drop in automobile sales, at the end of the day families are left feeling the pinch. It's not an easy time. Minister, what is your ministry doing to encourage new investment in the Clarkson area in order to prevent job losses like these and to protect the livelihood of Mississauga South residents?

Hon. Michael Bryant: The member has already listed the global factors that are at work, which have been acknowledged by the member. Will our government just leave those workers and this community on their own without any support? No, siree. We are there for those workers through, amongst other things, the advanced manufacturing investment strategy. One of the companies that benefited from this strategy is 2Source Manufacturing of Mississauga. The McGuinty government provides them with over \$5 million to help expand their successful aerospace business. This funding will help support 138 project-related jobs, including the creation of 70 new jobs.

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It is these investments in companies to partner with industry and businesses that in fact is the role that the government ought to play in creating jobs, sustaining jobs and incubating new jobs in the province of Ontario. I thank the member for fighting for his community in that regard.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Minister, as the day for closure of the PPG plant in Clarkson grows nearer, workers are apprehensive. They don't know how they're going to pay for their mortgages or support their families. Some may be asking if they will be able to afford retirement as they have planned and others may wonder if they will be able to save their children's education fund. When PPG closes its doors next year, it's not just 150 employees who will be affected; there are countless others who depend on them.

Minister, on behalf of those affected, what is this government doing to prepare workers at PPG to re-enter the workforce, and how will this government help them to find new jobs, meaningful jobs, where they can put their skills to work?

Hon. Michael Bryant: To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. John Milloy: I know I speak on behalf of all members of this House when I say how concerned we are for the workers and families at PPG. I just want to assure the House that my ministry was in contact with PPG as soon as we learned of the layoff. On Friday, I spoke directly with the adjustment adviser, and I understand that she'll be meeting with representatives of PPG to ensure that all affected employees have access to Employment Ontario services and training.

I think many members of this House are aware of the \$1.5-billion skills-to-jobs action plan in the last election, which will allow PPG employees to access services like our second-career strategy, which aims at long-term planning. We also have our rapid re-employment and training service: Within one hour of learning of a layoff, my ministry is in touch with both the employer and the employees to provide information on employment services and, when necessary, to set up an action centre which will allow all laid-off employees to access Employment Ontario services.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. The Premier tabled a motion in this House, the fairness motion to which we are all speaking, and in that motion he calls on Ottawa to apply fairness to funding specifically one area: health care. I want to point out to the Premier that there really is only one member from Ottawa who has any control over how health care funds are distributed in Ontario to make it fair, and that's the member from Ottawa South, the Premier himself.

I would like to know from the Premier whether or not he is prepared to apply the fairness principle in health care funding to the province of Ontario to ensure that the one health care budget over which he has absolute control, namely the health care budget of Ontario, will be applied fairly to all communities in this province.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'll be delighted to speak to the principle, and then if there are specifics flowing from the supplemental, I'll refer those. We're coming up short as a province nearly \$800 million, if you distribute health care funding to all communities on a per capita basis. What that would mean practically speaking is I think about 11,000 nurses, maybe 250 MRIs; so it's significant in terms of the level of underfunding and the difference we could make to improve the quality of services available for the people of Ontario and our families.

We work as hard as we can to take it to the next phase, where I think the honourable member is going next. We work as hard as we can to ensure that of the funds that we do receive, we distribute those equitably where need is called for—and that's never an easy call to make, because there could be needs in many communities which exceed resources. We work as hard as we can with communities to get that right.

Mr. Frank Klees: That same rationale, of course, can be used by the federal government. What I want to point out to the Premier is that in York region alone, our hospitals are underfunded to the tune of \$290 million a year compared to the other 14 regions. When compared to those 14 designated health care regions, we are fourth-lowest funded for home care, we're fourth-lowest funded for mental health, we are the lowest funded for addiction services and third-lowest funded for long-term-care residential services for our seniors.

If we stand up in this House and in all good conscience want to call on the federal government to

apply the fairness principle, I'm simply appealing to the Premier and I'm asking him: Of the billions of dollars of health care funding that he allocates through his Ministry of Health, will he stand up today and commit to distributing those funds on a fair and equitable basis in this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. David Caplan: Thank you very much. In fact, that is very much what my colleague the Minister of Finance unveiled in our last budget. We have a growing communities fund, some \$120 million over the course of the next three years, targeted to high-growth communities.

But I think the member has a more fundamental question that he should have to answer. As a member of a party which has committed itself to cutting \$3 billion out of our health care system, how would he redress York region's health needs? How would he be able to meet the needs of seniors anywhere in this province of Ontario? This member and all of his colleagues have a lot of explaining to do, because \$3 billion cut out of health care is not something that is going to address the health care needs of children and seniors anywhere in the province of Ontario. And until such time—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. The member from Hamilton—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a second. I'd just remind the minister—that's twice he's done that today—that when the Speaker rises, the minister is expected to take his seat. Start the clock.

The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is also for the Health and Long-Term Care Minister.

This government established the LHINs to ensure that it could claim an arm's-length relationship from the Harris-era damage it's doing by closing the McMaster adult emergency room in Hamilton. The people of Flamborough, Ancaster, Dundas, West Hamilton, the West Mountain and Hamilton East–Stoney Creek have not had sufficient opportunity for input on the impacts of this closure.

When will this minister direct the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant LHIN to stop this ill-conceived decision for at least 60 days, until a full, real public consultation has taken place? Please answer the question.

Hon. David Caplan: First of all, I disagree entirely with the rhetoric you hear coming from the member, because Hamilton Health Sciences is working to reorganize and realign health care services so that patients in Hamilton and the region will receive the best access to high-quality care. The plan that the member refers to has not even been finalized. I'm encouraged that Hamilton Health Sciences continues to engage the good people of Hamilton in the planning.

It's important to remember that the board of Hamilton Health Sciences has not even approved such a plan yet. According to their own website, the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant LHIN board of directors will consider the Hamilton Health Sciences access to best care plan at its board of directors meeting on September 29, which is today.

I am very supportive of local, transparent process aimed at improving our communities' access to health care services.

Mr. Paul Miller: Actually, that's totally wrong again. The LHIN is failing to conduct a full and proper consultation. It is consulting its own hand-picked physicians instead of a full range of health care professionals, agencies and affected community members.

Worse, the LHIN is holding the decision-making meeting in Grimsby, at the LHIN's headquarters, where there's no public transit for people from Hamilton to go to it.

It took pressure in this House and by the public to get the minister's predecessor to direct the same LHIN to stop its ill-fated contracting out of nursing home care, and I salute the former minister for that.

When will this minister direct the LHIN to stop the emergency room closure process for at least 60 days, to actually consult with the affected people in the area and the professionals and to hold a decision-making meeting accessible by public transit to the community where the damage has been done?

Hon. David Caplan: Once again, the information the member presents is not factually correct. In fact, if members of the public wish to go to a website, more information on the plan is available, including some frequently asked questions on the LHIN's own website.

In fact, the member should make very clear to the people of Hamilton that it is the law, passed by this Legislature, the Local Health System Integration Act, that the local health integration networks must engage the community about the local health system on an ongoing basis.

That is taking place. That is happening in an effective way. Unfortunately, the member seeks, for his own political purpose, to try to distort that picture. These are local community members who are busy working to engage local—

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Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Hamilton East, would you withdraw the comment you just made, please?

Mr. Paul Miller: With all due respect, Mr. Speaker, if he is—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Withdraw.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): And the second comment you just made, please.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'll withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: My question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. First of all, I want to acknowledge the new minister and to congratulate him on his new role.

We've already had a number of questions about the federal election today in question period. In my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, I have five First Nations communities. I notice that there's been a pronounced lack of information and focus on issues affecting our First Nations, Inuit and Metis people in this federal election, and I think all of my constituents, both aboriginal and non-aboriginal, deserve better than that.

Minister, my question to you: Is there anything I can relay to my constituents as to what they can do to draw more attention to the important issues of aboriginal affairs?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for the work that she's done in her own community with the First Nations people in that particular riding and thank her for her observations with regard to her questions, because she's quite right, there has been a lack of substance when it comes to discussions about aboriginal issues in the federal election.

I'm pleased to share with this House the efforts being made by our Assembly of First Nations National Chief Phil Fontaine, who's calling for today, September 29, to be a national political day of action. This is part of a public awareness campaign to encourage voting among First Nations voters and increase the profile of aboriginal issues in this election.

As well, I commend Grand Council Chief John Beauchage and the Union of Ontario Indians in establishing www.firstpeoplesvote.com. This is another effort being made to encourage those aboriginal people who wish to participate in the federal election to exercise their right to vote in an informed manner. I think it's very worthwhile and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: Thank you, Minister, for pointing out today's national political action day as well as your suggestions for all Ontarians. I hope that people will take you up on those things.

The minister and I have already had preliminary conversations about specific aboriginal affairs and issues in my riding, including the recommendations of Justice Linden on the Ipperwash report and how that impacts directly on Kettle and Stony Point First Nation in my riding. But I also realize that there are some people who may not be aware of the types of issues that impact our First Nations, Inuit and Metis people.

Minister, could you shed some light on what some of these issues are, and in particular what the Ontario government has been doing to help alleviate these issues?

Hon. Brad Duguid: In the time that I have to respond to the question—I could probably use about triple or quadruple the amount of time to respond.

Let me begin by saying that I think our first priority is to build on the extremely strong foundations built by my predecessor when it comes to building a strong, trusting and respectful relationship with our first people, Metis and Inuit populations. I want to recognize the efforts made by my predecessor, Michael Bryant. I think that my first goal will be to build on that very strong foundation, because I think that by building a stronger relationship, we can tackle some of the very complex social issues, whether it be housing, education or health, and work together with our First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples in driving the federal government to work harder to settle some of those land claims that I think are at the root of many of the issues—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question.

CHILD PROTECTION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Attorney General.

Minister, over the summer, Ontarians were devastated to learn of the untimely death of little Katelynn Sampson while in the custody of her legal guardian. The legal guardian, of course, had a long list of convictions, including assault with a weapon. Clearly, there's something wrong with our child protection system for this to have happened.

Last month, you committed to making any changes necessary to ensure the protection of our children, but nothing seems to have happened to date. Minister, when are you going to bring forward legislation which is going to require third party criminal record checks in any child custody cases involving third party applicants and also enable the Children's Lawyer to act independently for those children?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The member is quite right: We are absolutely determined as a government to ensure that we have the right legal protections and procedures in place to provide the types of protections all Ontarians expect and demand. That is why this past summer both I and my colleague Minister Matthews, Minister of Children and Youth Services, have both committed to work very hard not only within ministry but with the members of the judiciary, the legal community and the child protection community to make sure that we have the best possible approach to these very challenging issues. We want to get it right. We don't want to move precipitously and do something that looks good but would in fact create more harm than good. We're working hard, and we're determined to come forward as quickly as we can with the appropriate package of protections. I look forward to speaking with my colleague further on this matter.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended. I should have made this introduction earlier, and I do apologize. On behalf of the

member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, welcome to the students from A.M. Cunningham public school in Hamilton, who are enjoying a visit to Queen's Park today.

PETITIONS

SEXUAL REASSIGNMENT SURGERY

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition here, along with many. This one is from St. Gregory's Catholic Church.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the previous Progressive Conservative government determined sex change operations were not a medical spending priority and instead chose to invest in essential health care services; and

"Whereas Premier McGuinty said in 2004 that funding for sex change operations was not a priority of his government; and

"Whereas the current Liberal government has eliminated and reduced OHIP coverage for chiropractic, optometry and physiotherapy services; and

"Whereas the present shortage of doctors and nurses, troubling waiting times for emergency services and other treatment, operational challenges at many hospitals, as well as a crisis in our long-term-care homes signify the current government has not met their health care commitments;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario does not fund sex change operations under OHIP and instead concentrates its priorities on essential health services and directs our health care resources to improve patient care for Ontarians."

I affix my name and full support.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Bill Mauro: I have a petition entitled "Fairness for the People of Ontario," addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas the federal government gives more support for economic development, health care and infrastructure to other parts of Canada, and unemployed workers in Ontario get less employment insurance support than in other parts of Canada;

"Whereas the federal system of taxes and equalization extracts over \$20 billion from the people of Ontario every year above and beyond what Ottawa invests in Ontario;

"Whereas laid-off workers in Ontario get \$4,630 less in employment insurance than they would get if they lived in another part of Canada;

"Whereas federal health care money is supposed to be divided equally among all Canadians, but right now Ontario residents are shortchanged by \$773 million per year;

"Whereas the federal government provides economic development support for people living in the north, Atlantic Canada, Quebec and the west, but provides no development economic support for southern Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that the federal government stop gouging the people of Ontario and treat them fairly."

I support this petition and will sign my name to it.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: "Whereas the current Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital is fully utilized; and

"Whereas Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital was sized to serve a town of Oakville population of 130,000, and the current population is now ... over 170,000; and

"Whereas the population of Oakville continues to grow as mandated by 'Places to Grow,' an act of the Ontario Legislature, and is projected to be 187,500 in 2012, the completion date for a new facility in the original time frame; and

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"Whereas residents of the town of Oakville are entitled to the same quality of health care as all Ontarians; and

"Whereas hospital facilities in the surrounding area do not have capacity to absorb Oakville's overflow needs;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure take the necessary steps to ensure the new Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital be completed under its original timelines without further delay."

I'm pleased to pass the petition to the page Tamika. I've signed the petition myself because I agree with it totally.

GRAFFITI

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: A petition to the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas graffiti creates a nuisance that can adversely affect property values, business opportunities and the enjoyment of community life;

"Whereas graffiti promotes a sense of disrespect for private property, and a perception that laws protecting public and private property can be disregarded with impunity;

"Whereas it is important that everyone do their part in keeping both public and private properties free of graffiti in order to maintain community pride and confidence;

"Whereas the quick removal of graffiti from walls, fences and other structures is critical to maintaining community cleanliness and beauty; it is always true that the prevention is the best policy;

"Accordingly we, the undersigned, petition the Legislature:

"To impose certain conditions on the sale of spray paint, broad-tipped marker pens, paint pens, glass-cutting tools and glass-etching tools or instruments of graffiti, and to make it be unlawful for any person, other than a parent, legal guardian, school teacher or law enforcement officer in the performance of duty, to sell, exchange, give, deliver, loan, or otherwise furnish or permit to be sold, exchanged, given, delivered or loaned any prohibited graffiti material to any minor unless the minor is accompanied by their parent or legal guardian."

I agree with this petition and sign my name to it.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: "Whereas Milton District Hospital was designed to serve a population of 30,000 and the town of Milton is now home to more than 69,000 people and is still growing rapidly; and

"Whereas the town of Milton is the fastest-growing town in Canada and was forced into that rate of growth by an act of the Ontario Legislature called 'Places to Grow'; and

"Whereas the town of Milton is projected to have a population of 101,600 people in 2014, which is the earliest date an expansion could be completed; and

"Whereas the current Milton facility is too small to accommodate Milton's explosive growth and parts of the hospital prohibit the integration of new outpatient clinics and diagnostic technologies;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure take the necessary steps to ensure timely approval and construction of the expansion to Milton District Hospital."

I've signed this petition and I give it to page Michael.

GRAFFITI

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"Whereas it is important that everyone do their part in keeping both public and private properties free of graffiti in order to maintain community pride and confidence;

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I agree with the petition and have signed my name to it.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition here entitled "Fairness for Ontario Workers":

"Whereas the federal government's employment insurance surplus now stands at \$54 billion; and

"Whereas over 60% of Ontario's unemployed are not eligible for employment insurance because of Ottawa's unfair eligibility rules; and

"Whereas an Ontario worker has to work more weeks to qualify and receives fewer weeks of benefits than other Canadian unemployed workers; and

"Whereas the average Ontario unemployed worker gets \$4,000 less in EI benefits than unemployed workers in other provinces and thus not qualifying for many retraining programs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to press the federal government to reform the employment insurance program and to end the" gouging of Ontarians by the federal government.

I support this petition and affix my name to it.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition to stop unlawful firearms in the province of Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the growing number of unlawful firearms in motor vehicles is threatening innocent citizens and our police officers;

"Whereas police officers, military personnel and lawfully licensed persons are the only people allowed to possess firearms; and

"Whereas a growing number of unlawful firearms are transported, smuggled and found in motor vehicles; and

"Whereas impounding motor vehicles and suspending driver's licences of persons possessing unlawful firearms in motor vehicles would aid the police in their efforts to make our streets safer;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 56, entitled the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act, 2008, into law, so that we can reduce the number of crimes involving firearms in our communities."

I support this petition and I affix my name to it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There appearing to be no further petitions today, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1156 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DAVE TEETZEL

Mr. Frank Klees: I rise today to pay tribute to David Blair Teetzel, who went to be with his Lord and Saviour on September 22, 2008. Dave was supported throughout his seven-month fight with cancer by his wife, Sharon, his parents, Donna and Carol Teetzel, brother Gord and sister Ruth. The memorial service, held at Crosslands Church in Newmarket, was an uplifting celebration of Dave's life and an inspirational tribute to his courage and faith in his final days.

Dave was an award-winning columnist and gifted writer. After graduating from Ryerson University, he began his career as a reporter, and was editor of the York Region Media Group's *Economist* and *Sun* until his illness. Editor-in-chief Debora Kelly said this about her colleague Dave: "I know few men who are so truly kind and decent as Dave was. I respected his great intelligence, deep compassion and incredible work ethic, not to mention his quick wit and self-deprecating sense of humour. He had us laughing many times a day."

I want to leave honourable members with Dave's own words as a source of encouragement and testimony to the life and character of the man we honour today:

"Much as I hate having cancer, it puts me alongside people who are facing what I'm facing but aren't armed with the saving knowledge of Jesus. If God put me here to give them hope, I'll do that.

"I've heard it said that you see God working when you come to the end of yourself. That's where I am. But praise God, I'm not alone. Thank you all so much for standing beside Sharon and me through this time. God bless."

EVENTS IN ETOBICOKE-LAKESHORE

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: My community of Etobicoke-Lakeshore understands the important role residents play in supporting local business to ensure a strong and vibrant community. That's why I was so pleased to Shop the Shore in Etobicoke-Lakeshore on Saturday, September 20. Along with more 1,000 lakeshore residents, we came out to support our diverse retail sector in south Etobicoke. With the ongoing work to revitalize Toronto's waterfront, it is so critical that we continue to sustain the businesses that make our lakeshore community so unique. Shop the Shore is a grassroots initiative made up of proactive area residents. The Our Lakeshore group believes in making our community even better. So they're working with local business owners to build awareness and encourage the community to continue to shop

locally, reduce their carbon footprint and meet their local retailers.

On the same day, the Lakeshorelicious initiative was launched as a month-long festival of culinary excellence, featuring 15 participating lakeshore restaurants from Lake Promenade to Marie Curtis Park. We look forward to being able to welcome each and every one of you to our community for lunch or dinner very soon—and guides are available.

I want to recognize Scott Waddell and Denise Dickin; the Our Lakeshore team, local residents and volunteers; John Scheffer and the Lakeshore Village BIA; Lisa Laudenbach, of West Studio Cuisine; the joint BIA; and the many individuals and organizations who continue to work to make our Etobicoke–Lakeshore community a great place to live, shop, eat and represent.

ROSH HASHANAH

Mr. Peter Shurman: I am honoured to rise today on behalf of my Jewish constituents of Thornhill who are celebrating Rosh Hashanah.

Today marks the first day of Rosh Hashanah, the Head of the Year, otherwise known as the Jewish New Year. Rosh Hashanah is the first of the High Holy Days, which are days specifically set aside to focus on repentance and planning for the new year ahead. Rosh Hashanah begins tonight at dusk and will continue until Wednesday night. The High Holy Days end with Yom Kippur, which occurs next week.

Unlike secular New Year's celebrations, Rosh Hashanah is a very serious holiday where religious observances come first. Many of my constituents will be celebrating the holiday with family and friends at synagogue. Some of the Rosh Hashanah observances include sounding of the shofar, the ram's horn, which represents the trumpet blast of a people's coronation of their king; eating a piece of apple dipped in honey, to symbolize our desire for a sweet year, and other special foods symbolic of the new year's blessings; and blessing one another with the words "Leshanah tovah tikatevu," "May you be inscribed and sealed for a good year."

I wish the people of Thornhill and Jewish Ontarians everywhere Shanah Tovah, a good year.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I rise today to speak of more good news in the health care sector in Huron–Bruce as it pertains to long-term care. As part of our government's \$23.3-million investment to support the creation of 873 personal support workers, the riding of Huron–Bruce will receive just over a quarter of a million dollars for over 17,000 hours of care for area long-term-care homes. This funding will help increase the average paid hours of direct daily care per resident to 3.26 hours of nursing, personal care programming and support services for this year.

This is the first round of funding the McGuinty government has proposed in order to add the 2,500 new

personal support worker positions and 2,000 more nurses in long-term-care homes over the next four years, as announced in the 2008 budget. These additional front-line staff will increase the average paid hours of direct daily care per resident in long-term-care homes to 3.5 hours by 2011. As a result, long-term-care-home residents will benefit from more hands-on care such as personal hygiene care, help with transferring patients into chairs, vehicles or beds as well as dressing and undressing. This is just another manner in which the McGuinty government is providing strong health care to all Ontarians.

CLASS SIZE

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I want to speak today about the cap on primary class sizes and the inflexible legislation that governs it. Regrettably, this inflexible legislation is creating tremendous disruption and hardship in many school communities. One segment of the school population is the disabled child, who doesn't do well with disruption and who doesn't do well in a split grade. When trying to discuss the issue with officials from the school, the board and the trustees, the parents face a blame game. The educators and parents alike are looking to the minister for a solution. An inflexible policy should not override looking after the best interests of our students.

How can children reach their full potential when they are confronted with rules they don't understand and rules in which their parents have no confidence? I believe the intent may have been a good one, but good policies take into account the worst-case scenarios and they should plan for those eventualities. This is not a well-thought-out policy. More planning should have taken place to avoid the reorganization and disruption of students, parents and teachers, teachers who had to start from scratch preparing for split grades. It is the government, not the teachers, who should be starting from scratch in their planning process.

PROSTATE CANCER AWARENESS WEEK

Mr. Bill Mauro: Speaker, I rise today in recognition that September 15 through 21 was Prostate Cancer Awareness Week. As you and my colleagues are aware, I've risen in this House many times to speak about this cancer because it is a very prominent issue among men. In fact, prostate cancer is the most frequently diagnosed cancer in Canadian males and is the third most common cause of death due to cancer in men.

One of the ways to help protect against this cancer is by having a PSA test, which is a blood test that can help detect the cancer. I'm very pleased to highlight that in response to two private members' bills I introduced on this topic, the McGuinty government has announced that PSA testing will now be covered through OHIP starting January 1, 2009.

For my constituents at home in Thunder Bay–Atikokan, there are a handful of great community groups

they can contact to learn more about this issue. These groups include: the Atikokan Prostate Cancer Support Group, including Ron Speck; the Thunder Bay Area Prostate Support and Awareness Group, including Stan Cano, Steve Dychko, Barrie Midgley, Brian Scott and Bill Vantour; Keith Nymark with the Thunder Bay Seniors; and Thunder Bay Us Too, including Glen Duguid.

If you want more information about this cancer or the PSA test, I recommend and ask that you contact your doctor or the Canadian Cancer Society toll free. Alternatively, you can find information online at the Canadian Cancer Society's website.

I'd like to recognize all of my colleagues in this assembly for supporting my push to make this PSA test insurable for Ontarians, and I encourage all men, especially over the age of 50, to learn more about the ways they can protect themselves against cancer.

DRAPEAU FRANCO-ONTARIEN

M^{me} France Gélinas: Le jeudi 25 septembre—jeudi dernier—j'ai eu le plaisir et l'honneur d'assister à l'inauguration du monument de la francophonie sur le terrain du Collège du Sacré-Cœur à Sudbury. Le monument consiste en un arrangement paysager composé d'arbres et de rochers. On y retrouve de l'information au sujet de la communauté francophone de Sudbury, ainsi qu'un immense drapeau de 30 pieds sur 60 pieds, monté à un mât de 80 pieds.

Gaétan Gervais, le créateur du drapeau, était là. Il tenait précieusement le drapeau original cousu à la main il y a 33 ans, et dévoilé pour la première fois sur le campus de l'Université Laurentienne à Sudbury.

1310

Le drapeau franco-ontarien est un objet de fierté, un magnifique emblème de la francophonie ontarienne, ainsi qu'un important symbole patrimonial pour les générations futures. Nous, les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes, voyons dans ce drapeau notre contribution, nos richesses, notre culture et nos valeurs. Par ce drapeau vert et blanc, nous faisons connaître à toute la population de l'Ontario la valeur ajoutée de la francophonie dans nos communautés et notre province.

Le monument a été rendu possible grâce au Club Richelieu Les Patriotes, des bénévoles dynamiques et engagés au sein de la communauté francophone de la région.

Jeudi dernier, il n'y avait pas de vent, le soleil brillait et il faisait chaud à cuire. Lorsqu'ils ont hissé le drapeau, une légère brise s'est levée qui a déployé le drapeau dans toute sa splendeur et toute sa grandeur; c'était un moment émouvant et magique dont je vais me souvenir longtemps.

Longue vie au drapeau franco-ontarien.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I rise today to underscore the McGuinty Liberals' commitment to patient safety in

hospitals. Last May, our government announced that hospitals will be required to publicly report eight patient safety indicators as part of a comprehensive plan to create an unprecedented level of transparency in Ontario's hospitals.

As part of this comprehensive initiative, Dr. Michael Baker, physician-in-chief at University Health Network, is being appointed executive lead, patient safety, to oversee the government's patient safety agenda. He will build upon initiatives already taken, such as the hospital hand hygiene program.

The government is establishing clear accountability and ensuring strong leadership in our health system to help prevent the spread of infectious diseases by mandating public reporting of eight patient safety indicators; by making C. difficile outbreaks reportable to our public health units; by establishing clear expectations for hospitals and medical offices of health in the response to, and management of, infectious diseases; and by creating 14 regional infection control networks to share best practices and pool resources.

Tom Closson, president and CEO of the Ontario Hospital Association, stated his support for the government's action in saying that he believed "it will inspire improved performance, enhance patient safety and strengthen the public's confidence in Ontario hospitals."

The new reporting framework reflects our commitments to uphold the highest standards of care for Ontario patients.

ROSH HASHANAH

Mr. Monte Kwinter: Tonight at sundown, in the year 5769 in the Jewish calendar, the 10 days of repentance begin with Rosh Hashanah and end with Yom Kippur.

Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, ends at nightfall on Wednesday, October 1. The origin of Rosh Hashanah is Biblical. In Leviticus, chapter 23, verses 23 to 25, it states: "A sacred occasion commemorated with loud blasts of the shofar, the ram's horn."

In Talmudic times, Rosh Hashanah became a celebration of the world's creation and a day of self-examination, repentance and judgment. While the day was called Yom Hazikaron, the day of remembrance, and Yom Hadin, the judgment day, the name Rosh Hashanah, "Head of the Year," has become the most prevalent.

On Rosh Hashanah, Jews listen to the blowing of the shofar, or ram's horn, during lengthy prayer services, and are reminded that the Lord is King. They eat a festive meal with symbolic foods, such as apples and honey, and do no work. After repenting for bad deeds through prayers, they symbolically cast off sins through a solemn ceremony.

Rosh Hashanah is both a solemn and a happy day. Rosh Hashanah is a day of judgment, and is a time for Jews to review the mistakes they made in the past and resolve to make improvement in the coming year. It is a time for introspection, asking for forgiveness and praying for a healthy and happy year to come.

Those observing the Jewish New Year are solemn in their repentance but happy in their confidence that God is merciful and good. The traditional greeting on Rosh Hashanah is to wish everyone a good year, and to all, I say Shana Tova.

SPECIAL REPORT, AUDITOR GENERAL

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that pursuant to section 12(1) of the Auditor General Act, I've today laid upon the table the special report on the prevention and control of hospital-acquired infections.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES SERVICES À L'ENFANCE ET À LA FAMILLE

Ms. Matthews moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 103, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act and to make amendments to other Acts /
Projet de loi 103, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille et apportant des modifications à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The minister for a short statement?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I will make a statement during ministerial statements.

REPRESENTATION AMENDMENT ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA REPRÉSENTATION ÉLECTORALE

Mr. Hoy moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 104, An Act to amend the Representation Act, 2005 /
Projet de loi 104, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2005 sur la représentation électorale.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement?

Mr. Pat Hoy: The purpose of the bill is to change the name of the electoral district of Chatham-Kent-Essex to Chatham-Kent-Leamington.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Over the past four years, our government has worked to deliver a system that keeps our communities safe and gives youth every chance for success.

The legislative amendments being proposed today, if passed, will complete our government's transformation of Ontario's youth justice correctional system to a stand-alone system designed specifically with the needs of youth in mind.

I would like to take a moment to recognize in the gallery the ADM—and he is addressed as Gilbert Tayles—and thank him for the leadership he has shown in the transformation of our youth justice system. Thank you for being with us today.

A key goal of this transformation is reducing the number of youth who reoffend because every time we prevent a reoffence, we prevent a crime, and every time we turn a young person from a path that leads to a life of crime to a path that leads to productive employment, we have strengthened our economy and we have strengthened our society. We are doing this by maximizing opportunities for their rehabilitation while addressing, not only their unlawful behaviour, but also the factors that may have influenced the behaviour in the first place.

Currently, in Ontario, those youths 12 to 15 years of age at the time of an offence are governed by the Child and Family Services Act, CFSA, while those 16 and 17 years of age at the time of the offence are governed by the Ministry of Correctional Services Act.

Our proposed bill, the Child and Family Services Statute Law Amendment Act, 2008, harmonizes these two pieces of legislation to create a single, youth-focused, provincial legislative framework governing custody, detention and community programs for youth in conflict with the law aged 12 to 17 at the time of an offence. This will create a system that is completely separate from the adult justice system in facilities that were designed with youth in mind, a system that offers a broad continuum of community-based alternatives consistent with the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

Placing older youth with younger youth under one act does not mean we are holding these kids any less accountable for their actions and the poor choices they have made. Our proposed legislation provides decision-makers with greater discretion in determining the level of detention for youth awaiting sentencing. This is consistent with the federal proposal to broaden the possibility of detention for a young person who represents a danger to the public.

1320

A dedicated, fully integrated youth justice system for youth aged 12 to 17 at the time of the offence reflects the reality that young people in custody have different needs

than adults in custody. In line with the new legislation, our government is modernizing and building new youth justice facilities in a number of communities across the province. These new and expanded facilities will accommodate young people who are currently held in youth units located in adult secure correctional institutions. Most of the youth in secure custody units have now been moved out of facilities shared with adults. A new secure youth-only facility, the Donald Doucet centre, opened recently in Sault Ste. Marie, and new or expanded secure youth-only facilities will be up and running by next April in Brampton, Thunder Bay, Fort Frances and Ottawa.

These facilities, while holding youth responsible for their behaviour, will provide young people with the supports and services they need to help them make better choices and become contributing members of society. They will feature on-site education and rehabilitation programs to help reduce the number of youths in conflict with the law who reoffend, an important goal of our government. The new facilities will also bring youth in conflict with the law closer to their families, which will ease their reintegration into the community.

Our transformation strategy is based on evidence, not on ideology, and the evidence clearly shows that a broad range of community-based and custodial programs and services can reduce reoffending. That's why we're committed to improving outcomes for youth by providing a wide range of programs and services that respond to their needs and their strengths, moving away from a predominantly custody-based system. I'm proud of our government's investments in new programs that are now offered in many communities across Ontario. These programs and community supports contribute to community safety and address the needs not only of youth, but their families and the communities in which they live.

We're also focusing on prevention. We want to help young people before they make the poor choices that will get them into conflict with the law. The Review of the Roots of Youth Violence, co-chaired by Roy McMurtry and Alvin Curling, will help identify the root causes of violence involving youth and provide recommendations to continue building safer, stronger communities and schools. The consultation phase attracted more than 5,000 submissions in its online survey, and the review's report and recommendations are expected to be released soon.

Through our youth opportunities strategy, we're supporting youth in underserved communities by providing expanded employment and training programs, introducing new student success programs, and making it easier for young people to access services through the hiring of outreach workers and a youth-focused website.

We all want to give young people, including young people in the justice system, the support and opportunities they need so they can have a bright and successful future. By recognizing the unique needs of youth in conflict with the law, we can help keep our communities safe and strong and we can help these young people make the right choices and be the best they can

be. Our proposed bill, the Child and Family Services Statute Law Amendment Act, 2008, is an important step in that direction.

HEALTHY SCHOOLS

ÉCOLES SAINES

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Our health is our most precious asset.

Ce matin, nous avons annoncé un investissement qui pourrait sauver des vies.

When someone experiences sudden cardiac arrest, minutes can count. Evidence shows that early intervention by trained personnel using automated heart defibrillators can help save that person. If used along with early CPR, survival rates can improve by as much as 50% or more.

Demonstrating an understanding of CPR is already part of the Ontario curriculum, and now more students will have the opportunity to learn how to use a defibrillator because we are providing \$1.4 million to the Advanced Coronary Treatment Foundation, the ACT Foundation. The funding will help support training for teachers so they can teach students how to use a defibrillator as part of their health and physical education class. The funding will also help provide defibrillators, mannequins and other training tools for the schools. Equipping students with this skill and knowledge means they will be able to offer help when it's needed.

Ils seront prêts à réagir rapidement en cas d'urgence à la maison pour aider un membre de leur famille ou un ami, ou à l'école pour aider un enseignant ou un camarade.

This learning can help students protect their families and friends, and make a real difference in their communities.

I want to applaud the ACT Foundation for its work in this area. I'd like to recognize Executive Director Sandra Clarke and Rachel Cameron, who have joined us today from the ACT Foundation. Thank you very much for your work.

In 2004, our government invested \$650,000 to support the foundation's vital work, et c'est avec grand plaisir que j'ai annoncé aujourd'hui que nous continuerons à appuyer la fondation.

This is just one of the ways we're helping Ontario students learn more about protecting their health and the health of others.

Starting this September, for example, schools were required to drop trans fats from food and beverages sold in schools.

Nous sommes aussi en train d'élaborer des normes sur la nutrition à l'intention des écoles. As well, the healthy schools recognition program applauds schools that have taken the initiative to make their schools healthier; par exemple, en créant un club de course à pied, un jardin potager ou un programme de prévention des blessures.

Over the last two years, more than 1,700 schools have been recognized for taking on more than 4,500 new

healthy activities. We introduced 20 minutes of daily physical activity during instructional times in elementary schools, and thanks to Sabrina's Law, every school board is required to have an anaphylaxis policy. Through the health and physical education curriculum, students also learn the value of taking care of their own health through healthy eating and active living.

Earlier this month, we introduced a number of healthy recipes to four pilot secondary schools in Ontario. In these four schools, students in the specialist high skills major in hospitality and tourism had the chance to meet with celebrity chef David Rocco as part of a pilot project called Eating Well Looks Good on You. Ils ont préparé un repas sain et délicieux avec lui, ils ont parlé avec lui de ses expériences et ils en ont appris davantage sur l'importance d'acheter des produits locaux.

These recipes are available online for all schools to use now.

The reasons for taking all of these steps are clear: When students are healthy, they have more energy and are better able to focus on learning; a healthy body depends on a healthy mind, and vice versa—a healthy mind depends on a healthy body; and healthy students are more likely to become healthy adults. That's good for us, it's good for school communities and it's good for Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased on behalf of the official opposition to make a few comments on the legislation that has been introduced today. I guess the first thing that comes to my mind is the fact that it's referred to as a transformation of youth justice services. In my mind, a transformation is quite a marked departure from what has been the case. Actually, when you look at the information that was provided to us, this bill is in fact described as one which will bring the proposed amendments and will harmonize two pieces of legislation to create a single provincial legislative framework. I hardly regard that as a transformation.

I thought it was interesting that, in the minister's own words, she used the fact that the purpose of the bill was to harmonize. Certainly, I don't see harmony as equal to transformation. What I do say is that in this particular instance, we're looking at something that is already current policy. It is essentially an administrative piece of legislation, as described, to bring together existing pieces.

It's interesting to note that already many of the buildings are either complete or under construction. So this is simply a point in time when the minister then can decree a transformation has taken place.

I would suggest that as the Minister of Children and Youth, there is a greater responsibility in showing leadership on this particular file. As all of us are aware of the increased number of youth involved in serious criminal acts as they escalate around the province, we need to be

seeing demonstrated leadership on dealing with causes of criminal behaviour. We need to see the minister using the opportunity to take leadership on the poverty file, which is hers, to address the systemic issues leading to youth criminal activity.

1330

So while there is obviously some administrative gain to be made through this piece of legislation, to see action on the actual issues, around systemic issues, around causes, would actually be true transformation.

HEALTHY SCHOOLS

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'm pleased to stand and congratulate the minister on the partnership with the Advanced Coronary Treatment Foundation. Too often, we hear of young people struck down in the prime of their lives and in front of their classmates, and it's tragic.

Automated external defibrillators have made a significant impact in the mortality rates of people who suffer sudden cardiac arrest. Survival rates, it's proven, can be improved by 50%.

It is also important to see ministries working together to achieve a common goal. The Minister of Education and the Minister of Health Promotion have identified an issue where, together, they can have an immediate impact. Students may not only have the opportunity of saving lives of high school students who may suffer from a cardiac arrest, but a future life skill that they can carry into their lives.

I'm on record in this Legislature advocating for life skills training for our young people. Skilled use of an automated external defibrillator is a life-and-death skill that I sincerely hope they never have to use—but are properly prepared to step into the gap if they have to save a friend or a family member. I see this as a P3 partnership. The PC caucus has long supported P3 partnerships. So if it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, I guess—I'm thrilled that the government has embraced public-private partnership and I hope that it will continue to do so because there are many great things that we can accomplish to help Ontarians, together with their community organizations. This principle also goes to the core of belief that runs deep in our PC Party, that government is about facilitating the efforts of the private sector and organizations to maximize their potential.

I look forward to the opportunity of visiting one of these classrooms when the opportunity presents itself.

I want to thank the minister for this initiative and also for reminding us about all the most recent photo ops.

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm pleased to respond to the statement regarding the bill introduced by the Minister of Children and Youth Services. I want to start by saying that I am a little bit concerned about the minister's lack of commitment to consulting with youth when she brings

legislation forward that affects them. We know that in the summertime, the youth advocate of the day, Agnes Samler, had sent a letter indicating she was concerned and offering to help with that consultation process. My understanding from the briefing we had this afternoon is that there was no real consultation with youth in the province in terms of the drafting of this legislation—very disappointing. I thought she would have learned from the last piece of legislation that we dealt with that youth have a voice and they want that voice to be heard.

Having said that, the bill basically takes kids who are 16 and 17 who are currently incarcerated in the adult system and migrates them over to a single system, 12 to 17. The concern is that the kids who are coming into the same system as the 12-year-old kids—I would be worried that we wouldn't have rules and regulations that are specific to older kids being foisted upon younger kids, where it's really inappropriate. So we'll be watching for that to make sure, for example, that some 12-year-old's letter to mom isn't going to be intercepted for fear that there's some dangerous material in there that's going to be problematic for this 12-year-old to send to their mom.

The reality is that the government is not really paying attention to some of the causes of crime in our communities and I think particularly to the numbers of young people in Toronto and other communities, large and small, who simply do not have any hope left. Their families have been living in poverty for generation upon generation. They live in affordable housing that's crumbling at the seams. They don't have any hope of a job, let alone higher education. These are the problems that we need to start solving, if we're going to get to the situation where desperate people do desperate things. We know that that's a problem particularly highlighted in racialized communities.

I know the deputy minister mentioned their excitement around staffing up the new facilities that are being developed in Ontario with staff who reflect the community, because we know that the look of the community has changed, the inference being that the youth in these facilities are largely from racialized communities. If we're admitting that through our staffing process, then what the heck is this government doing to try to mitigate some of the issues that are faced by racialized communities in this province?

The minister talks about providing opportunities for young people when they go back to their communities when they have completed their sentences. Back to what? Back to no jobs, back to low incomes, back to jobs that are marginal at best, if they have one at all, and back to no opportunity for higher education. The work that needs to be done, I would submit, is far beyond what is in this bill. But I look forward to making sure that what is in this bill does properly serve the youth of Ontario.

HEALTHY SCHOOLS

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm happy to respond to the Minister of Education's \$1.4-million initiative. "The

funding will help support training for teachers so they can teach students how to use a defibrillator as part of their health and physical education class." This is a useful tool. It will allow students to help when help is required.

In the school system, only 2% of people are affected by this, but perhaps more would be outside the school system. Again, this is a response to the problem rather than how we, as a government, help to prevent the problem in the first place.

We know that 80% of Canadians have at least one risk factor for heart disease—smoking, alcohol, physical inactivity, obesity, high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol or diabetes—and this is what we've got to deal with. Unless we deal with that, all the little efforts we make will not be that helpful in terms of addressing the problems we've got in the first place.

We want to get physical education teachers able to teach this program, but we know that only 34% or 35% of schools have physical education teachers. That means that 65% of schools will not have somebody to teach how to use defibrillators because we don't have the physical education teachers. So if we want to be able to deal with this, let's hire some physical education teachers.

We also have the problem that we are closing schools, and that means that fewer people are going to be walking to school; they will have to use a bus to get there. That's not very helpful.

I introduced a bill that says, "Let's ban advertising to kids under the age of 18; ban ads for calorie-rich and nutrient-poor foods." If we want to get to the cause of the problem, let's deal with these fundamentals rather than these little efforts which, of course, we support.

DEFERRED VOTES

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On September 25, Mr. Shurman moved that Mr. McGuinty's motion respecting fiscal fairness for Ontario be amended by adding the following:

"Fairness in Ontario's taxation policies so that people already overburdened by taxes in this province are not subjected to the proposed carbon tax."

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1338 to 1343.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the members that they will be voting on the amendment moved by Mr. Shurman that the motion respecting fiscal fairness for Ontario be amended by adding the following: "Fairness in Ontario's taxation policies so that people already overburdened by taxes in this province are not subjected to the proposed carbon tax."

All those in favour will rise one at a time to be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Bailey, Robert
Chudleigh, Ted
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Gélinas, France
Hardeman, Ernie
Horwath, Andrea

Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Kormos, Peter
MacLeod, Lisa
Marchese, Rosario
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia

Murdoch, Bill
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Prue, Michael
Savoline, Joyce
Shurman, Peter

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed, rise.

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Bentley, Christopher
Broten, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Bryant, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.
Carroll, Aileen
Chan, Michael
Colle, Mike
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duncan, Dwight

Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoy, Pat
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kular, Kuldip
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Mangat, Amrit
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McGuinty, Dalton
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Mitchell, Carol

Moridi, Reza
Naqvi, Yasir
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Smitherman, George
Sousa, Charles
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim
Wynne, Kathleen O.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 19; the nays are 49.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the amendment lost.

Amendment negated.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is the House ready for the question on the main motion by Mr. McGuinty? I heard a no. The debate will continue on government motion number 10.

Hon. Michael Bryant: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I want to perhaps give the Legislature another opportunity to speak to this matter. I know the House leaders had an agreement on this, and it's up to the member to express his views on the vote itself. So I seek unanimous consent that the previous address to the Legislature be redone so that the House may consider whether or not to collapse debate at this time and put the matter to a vote—not to use technical language, Speaker.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: With respect, that's not a valid point of order.

Hon. Michael Bryant: Unanimous consent?

Mr. Peter Kormos: The Speaker put a question to the House, and the House responded. There is a way for the debate to not proceed should people not wish it to proceed, and that means nobody stands up to speak to it. But you don't frustrate the intention of the House or try to direct the hand of what you might see as ill-disciplined colleagues. It's an entirely inappropriate point of order. If it's the will of the House that the debate in fact collapse, the debate will collapse.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The government House leader seeks unanimous consent for me to—

Mr. Bill Murdoch: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: This is unanimous consent, and I haven't been informed

about this. So I think I would have to vote against it if it comes up for a vote, because no one has informed me about any unanimous consent.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The government House leader seeks unanimous consent for the Speaker to once again ask for the question. Agreed? I heard a no. The debate will continue on motion number 10.

ORDERS OF THE DAY**FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL
FISCAL POLICIES**

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 29, 2008, on the motion relating to calling upon all federal party leaders and Ontario candidates in the upcoming federal election to outline their plan to ensure fair treatment for Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate on government order 10. Further debate?

Once again, I will pose the question: Is the House ready for the question on the main motion by Mr. McGuinty? Agreed.

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

1350

ORDERS OF THE DAY**COLLEGES COLLECTIVE
BARGAINING ACT, 2008****LOI DE 2008 SUR LA NÉGOCIATION
COLLECTIVE DANS LES COLLÈGES**

Mr. Moridi, on behalf of Mr. Milloy, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 90, An Act to enact the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act, 2008, to repeal the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act and to make related amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 90, Loi édictant la Loi de 2008 sur la négociation collective dans les collèges, abrogeant la Loi sur la négociation collective dans les collèges et apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate. The member from Richmond Hill.

Mr. Reza Moridi: For Ontario to succeed in today's highly competitive global economy, we need every Ontarian to be at their best. That's why our government is so committed to investing in the skills and the knowledge of our people. It's our highly skilled workforce that gives Ontario the competitive edge we need to succeed. This is true in normal times, and it is especially true in today's challenging economic environment. High fuel prices, a

higher Canadian dollar, an American financial sector in unprecedented crisis and other factors are all contributing to uncertain times here in Ontario and around the world. These are not times to be complacent.

Our government has stepped forward with our five-point plan for Ontario's economy.

(1) We are reducing the cost of doing business by cutting taxes and keeping Ontario among the most competitive tax jurisdictions in North America.

(2) We are making a \$60-billion commitment over 10 years to infrastructure, including our colleges and universities that are experiencing unprecedented growth.

(3) We are partnering with businesses in key sectors to help keep them competitive and growing into the future. This includes partnering with the vital auto industry, the cornerstone of our manufacturing sector, to build new automotive centres of excellence in Windsor and Oshawa, helping to ensure that new investments come to Ontario.

(4) We are focusing on innovation, recognizing that it is the ingenuity of our people that will ensure our future success. We know if we can provide the innovative goods and services that the world needs, then the world will beat a path to our door. Our colleges play an increasingly important role in fostering innovation among our young people, exposing them to the latest technologies and preparing them for today's workforce and tomorrow's. To spur innovation on, we announced this past spring, in the 2008 budget, that Ontario will be a tax-free jurisdiction for any new start-ups' commercializing of Canadian research. So if you take an idea coming out of any Canadian college, university or research institution and turn it into a business during the course of the next 10 years, whether your profit is \$1 or \$1 billion, you will pay zero by way of corporate income taxes.

(5) Finally, we are investing in our people. More young people are now graduating from high school than ever before. We have 50,000 more young people in our apprenticeship programs and 100,000 more in our colleges and universities than we did just five years ago. We have the highest rate of post-secondary education in the western world. That is a competitive edge worth honing and worth owning.

Despite all the troubling economic news lately, Ontario currently has 100,000 jobs that we can't fill, and many of those require high skills. That's where our new second-career strategy comes in. It is the most ambitious plan of its kind in Canada. We are investing \$355 million to help people who have been laid off to train for new careers. We'll help with tuition, books, living expenses and other costs toward retraining for anywhere from six months to two years, or even longer in some cases. We will cover up to \$28,000 of each person's education costs.

We need Ontarians to get the skills they need to fill the jobs that are out there, like in the skilled services sector, advanced manufacturing, financial services, pharmaceuticals, digital media, information and communication technology or, in the not-too-distant future, once again in our auto sector.

By helping each and every Ontarian reach full potential, we can help them secure well-paying jobs so they can support their families and we can continue to attract the kinds of jobs and investments that will keep our province and our people moving forward.

Ontario's colleges have an absolutely critical role to play in helping to develop the highly skilled workforce we need now and in the future. Our 24 colleges of applied arts and technology have helped our province build an international reputation for excellence in education. College leaders, faculty and staff work hard, day in and day out, to help students develop the skills they need to work in the high-demand sectors of our economy.

Ontario's colleges have also done a tremendous job of partnering with employers to identify local economic needs and help develop talented, skilled graduates who can meet those needs.

We want to help Ontario's colleges build on that success. We need them to play an even more pivotal role, including a central role in the second-career strategy.

The proposed legislation before us today, Bill 90, would help us do just that. If it is approved, it would contribute to the modernization of our college system and ensure that students continue to get the high-quality education they deserve and our economy needs.

This proposed legislation would mark the first significant overhaul of collective bargaining in the college sector since the process currently in place was established in 1975.

When Ontario's college system was first established, in the 1960s, it was envisioned as adding an important new aspect to post-secondary education for the province, offering an alternative to university to many students who might not otherwise have pursued their education following high school.

It also offered a new form of post-secondary education that could respond to the province's job training and education needs in light of challenging economic and social demands.

This obviously rings just as true today as it did then. Reflecting the unique characteristics and needs of the sector, a single, unique labour relations regime was established for the colleges, with separate bargaining units representing full-time academic and full-time support staff. For various reasons, part-time staff, representing a smaller portion of overall college workers at that time, were excluded from collective bargaining.

1400

But times have changed since the 1960s and so have our colleges. Thanks to the hard work and dedication of the many academic and support staff who have worked in the college system over the years, Ontario's 24 colleges of applied arts and technology have evolved into an essential part of our post-secondary education system. Some of the leading animators, business administrators, health care professionals and computer technicians, as well as leaders in many other sectors, come from Ontario's colleges. Increasingly, our colleges are partnering with universities to provide even more education options for Ontarians.

In the current economic climate, our colleges are a cornerstone of our government's response to the challenges our province faces. Rising fuel prices and an American economy facing recession are challenging Ontario's manufacturing sector, the lungs and heart of our economy. Education programs and training and apprenticeship opportunities being offered by our colleges are helping workers faced with layoffs from manufacturing and other jobs retrain for new careers.

Our colleges are helping industries such as construction, which face shortages of skilled workers, ensure that enough new workers are being trained to fill vacancies. This will be a crucial task if we are to keep Ontario's economy moving forward and growing. Our government has been investing heavily in colleges, recognizing the important role they play in our society, our economy and our economy's future. This summer we announced \$190 million in new capital funding to expand training facilities at 12 colleges across Ontario. These investments will help our colleges offer some of the best programs possible in some of the best facilities possible with modern and effective equipment to learn on, in the careers that Ontario needs. We're also providing \$60 million over three years for the college equipment and renewal fund, helping colleges purchase the most modern equipment to train students on, so that when they graduate, they can enter the workforce already fully trained on the machines and technology currently used in the workplace.

Each college also recently benefited from \$65 million for the sector, provided through the 2007-08 campus renewal fund. This funding is helping improve energy efficiency on campuses, pay for new campus safety and security projects, improve the safety of students, make repairs and improvements to existing campus facilities and improve the learning environment for students and faculty.

As we focus more on ensuring that Ontarians have the skills they need to succeed and that our economy has the workers needed to keep our province moving forward, our college system is taking on an even more vital role. Colleges are the cornerstone of our new second-career strategy, part of our \$1.5-billion, three-year skills-to-jobs action plan from the 2008 budget. Second career will help 20,000 recently laid-off workers retrain for new careers, and our colleges are playing a central role. Through second career, students at Cambrian College in Sudbury are training in electrical engineering and business administration. Centennial College students, in Toronto's east end, are training in computer engineering and early childhood education. St. Clair College students in Windsor are training in construction engineering and power engineering technology.

Our colleges are once again evolving, rising to meet the new challenges we face and ensuring that Ontarians have access to the education and training programs they need for today's economy and tomorrow's jobs. It is our role as a government to ensure that they have the resources they need to meet these challenges and help keep our economy strong and moving forward.

We have been doing our part through the most significant reinvestment in post-secondary education in Ontario in 40 years, but we recognize that we must go beyond simply providing more funding. We must ensure that our colleges are able to fulfill their evolving and expanding role in our society and provide them with a strong foundation to do so. That is what Bill 90 will help do. By proposing a more modern, more effective labour relations regime, Bill 90 would, if passed, help establish more effective and more stable processes for labour and management to negotiate new contracts. This would help workplace parties build a stronger relationship, address workplace issues in a more effective way and help our colleges be able to focus more on providing the best education possible for our students.

Our discussions with stakeholders during our review of the current collective bargaining processes in colleges demonstrated that this is exactly what all workplace parties in our college system want as well. But what also became clear was that there were varying visions among stakeholders as to what a new collective bargaining regime in the college sector should look like. Some wanted to simply include part-timers under current legislation and within current bargaining units; others wanted to scrap the separate collective bargaining processes that currently exist for colleges and simply include the sector under Ontario's Labour Relations Act, which governs most other workplaces in the province.

Our government wanted to make sure that whatever changes were to be ultimately proposed, they be the right ones. For this reason, we decided to conduct the first major review of the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act since 1988, when the Gandz report was submitted to the government of the day. We appointed the highly respected chair of the Ontario Labour Relations Board, Mr. Kevin Whitaker, as adviser to conduct the review.

Mr. Whitaker spent last fall conducting extensive consultations with college sector stakeholders, listening to the concerns and recommendations of all key players. Key aspects of the review included keeping the needs of students front and centre and focusing recommendations on establishing a healthy and a fair collective bargaining environment for our colleges. On February 1 this year, Mr. Whitaker delivered a thorough report on the current regime and a series of comprehensive recommendations on how collective bargaining processes in our colleges could be revised.

The review made one thing clear: All parties in the college system support the inclusion of part-time workers in collective bargaining. But there was a range of options as to how this could be best accomplished. Our government appreciates these differences of opinion and we appreciate the work Mr. Whitaker has done in making the recommendations to balance the needs of all parties in a fair and equitable way.

Mr. Whitaker's review focused on three main areas:

—How should collective bargaining rights be extended to part-time workers?

—What are the likely consequences of the extension of collective bargaining to part-time workers in terms of

college mandate, collective bargaining and student interests?

—What, if anything, needs to be done to ensure that the colleges can continue to meet their mandate, safeguard the interests of students and employees, and foster and maintain a healthy set of collective bargaining relationships?

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The review resulted in 17 specific recommendations from Mr. Whitaker to the government with regard to amending the current collective bargaining legislation for colleges. Some of his key recommendations include:

—extending the legislation to cover part-time workers under two new bargaining units, one for part-time academic staff and one for part-time support staff;

—creating a new employee bargaining unit representing all colleges under the exclusive control and direction of colleges to replace the current government-appointed body that represents colleges in negotiations;

—continuing current exclusions from collective bargaining for managers and students in co-operative or certification programs;

—removing fixed expiry dates for contracts, currently August 31, and allow the parties to negotiate when collective agreements end;

—removing the deemed strike or lockout provisions and the requirements for colleges to seek the approval of the council to close in the event of a strike or lockout; and

—making other changes to collective bargaining processes in colleges to bring them more in line with the Ontario Labour Relations Act.

Our government was very impressed with the thought and the reasoning behind the comprehensive recommendations made by Mr. Whitaker in his final report. We have thoroughly reviewed all of his recommendations and we have since followed up with key stakeholders and meetings to once again go over the issues and concerns put forward. The result is the current bill being considered by this Legislature.

The proposed new Colleges Collective Bargaining Act would, if passed, broadly implement the recommendations made by Mr. Whitaker and, we believe, provide increased modernity, fairness and stability to collective bargaining in our college system. If this bill is passed, it would give part-time and sessional college workers the right to bargain collectively for the first time in Ontario. This is a commitment our government made last year, and I am proud to see it included in this proposed legislation.

We believe that this bill, if passed, would establish a more stable, effective process for negotiations, covering both full-time and part-time college workers. It would make a new era where college employers and college workers would have greater ownership of the collective bargaining process. It would, our government believes, lead to a strengthened and more stable college system, better able to focus on the needs of our students and

better able to deliver the high-quality education Ontarians need and deserve.

Based on Mr. Whitaker's recommendations, we are proposing to replace the current legislation governing collective bargaining in colleges and replace it with our proposed new Colleges Collective Bargaining Act, 2008, Bill 90, which is before us today.

The following are key highlights being proposed in this important legislation.

Two new bargaining units are being proposed for part-time and sessional workers in colleges, one for academic staff and one for support staff.

We propose that existing worker exclusions continue, such as those for managerial and confidential exclusions from collective bargaining, as well as exclusions for students in co-op work programs.

We propose that the current provisions for certification of bargaining agents be revised and made more in line with the Labour Relations Act. At the same time, certain modifications are being proposed to recognize the unique nature of the college sector.

The threshold to trigger a vote would be maintained at 35%, rather than 40%, as under the Labour Relations Act.

The existing two bargaining units for full-time academic and support staff would remain.

There would be a certification process, should this legislation be approved, to allow a union to seek to represent these workers.

We are proposing that the collective bargaining responsibilities of the College Compensation and Appointments Council, a government-appointed agency that currently negotiates on behalf of the employer, be transferred to a new body called the College Employer Council, composed of the chair of the board of governors and the president of each college.

We propose removing the current fixed date for the expiry of collective agreements of August 31.

We are proposing that the current seven-month notice period to begin negotiations be amended to 90 days before the end of a college bargaining agreement.

As with the Labour Relations Act, the employer would be prevented from altering work conditions unless the parties were in a legal strike or lockout position, unless agreed to by the union.

We believe that this would be fair and reasonable and in line with existing practices in most Ontario workplaces.

We are proposing eliminating the current fact-finding exercise, allowing the Minister of Labour to appoint a conciliation officer and mediators, as under the Labour Relations Act.

We are proposing that the current deemed strike or lockout provisions be eliminated.

Finally, we are proposing changes that would allow the employer's last offer to be put to a vote within 15 days of the expiry of the collective agreement.

We believe that these proposed changes would bring collective bargaining in colleges more in line with other

Ontario workplaces, while still recognizing the unique aspects of our college system.

We believe these proposed changes would introduce a more fair and productive labour relations environment in our college system and help result in negotiated agreements that better reflect the reality of today's college workplaces.

Overall, the government believes that our proposed new Colleges Collective Bargaining Act would, if passed, provide a fair, reasonable and effective college collective bargaining regime for our vital college system.

This proposed bill is the product of the hard work, ideas and insight of many people. I want to thank everyone in the college sector who provided our government with such valuable input into this important bill. I want to give special thanks to the Ontario Labour Relations Board chair, Mr. Kevin Whitaker.

This legislation would not only extend collective bargaining rights to part-time workers, it would also make other important changes to how collective bargaining takes place in our college system, changes that our government believes would make collective bargaining in colleges more effective. These changes would also bring collective bargaining at colleges more in line with Ontario's Labour Relations Act.

By improving the collective bargaining process, we can strengthen our college system to the benefit of all parties, especially students. We can encourage more stable, predictable labour relations so that all parties can continue to focus on providing the best education possible for students in a productive learning environment. This is what we must focus on when considering this legislation: our students. We must ensure that there's a proper balance between ensuring an effective collective bargaining process for college workers and ensuring the best possible learning experience for our students. Our government believes that this proposed legislation offers this balance.

As you know, our government has made post-secondary education one of the five pillars of our government's plan for our economy.

We will continue to ensure that our colleges have the resources they need to provide students with the best education possible.

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Our \$1.5-billion skills-to-jobs action plan invests in the skills and knowledge of Ontarians and helps train today's worker for tomorrow's jobs. We will invest \$560 million over three years to expand and improve training and apprenticeship programs across the province; we will invest \$465 million over three years to provide more financial support and mentoring for students; and we will invest \$970 million over three years to build and improve places where students learn and to update college equipment. After all, it is today's students who will build tomorrow's knowledge-based economy. They need to learn in modern labs and classrooms equipped with the best resources so they can emerge into the workforce prepared to hit the ground running on day one, because in

today's highly competitive global economy, we can't afford to stand still, not even for a second. We need to constantly look for ways to innovate, and, most importantly, to work together so that we can compete and win.

That's why this proposed legislation is so important. It brings our colleges' collective bargaining process into the 21st century, streamlining it and making it effective for all parties involved so that we can focus on developing the most highly skilled workforce in the world and build prosperity for all Ontario families.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):
Questions and comments?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I appreciate the opportunity to speak. The member spoke on a number of areas and, of course, the second-career strategy is a big concern for a lot of the individuals who work in the auto sector and who are looking at where they can go now and what's taking place in the manufacturing sector as a whole. With the changing world economy, I certainly hope—well, I'm not sure how it's going to unfold, but we certainly need to strengthen that system to make sure we can retain the jobs as much as possible in our communities.

One of the areas that concerns me or that I'd like more information on, and I may be able to obtain some today, would be regarding the part-time workers and the impact on this, the pension and benefits issue: how that would play out, that whole role. Would they be contributing to a full-time pool or would it be a separate pool? How would it be managed and how would it unfold? Individuals, for example, doing work one night a week, teaching an evening school course: How would that be impacted and what would take place there, and where would it fall into?

As we know, pensions are a big issue with a lot of sectors now, as they are becoming slightly underfunded. Would this shore that up, or at a later date, or are they looking for other problems in the pension sector to try and determine how it's going to play out for the part-time individuals working in that? As well, of course, there are the benefits and how that would play out and who would manage it. As we know, individuals who retire and move into those sectors—who controls, and how many seats do they have in the decision-making process as pertains to their sector? If you're going to include the part-time individuals in the collective sector with the full-time individuals, would that impact, or in what direction, and how much say are they going to have when they make the decisions regarding their pensions? I would certainly hope the pensions and benefits would be key.

Most importantly, though, coming from Oshawa, the member mentioned the auto sector and the impact there. We need to ensure that we can maintain a strong manufacturing sector going into the future, whether that's production and quality. The changes will keep Oshawa and the current plant stable for a number of years, but we have many jobs that we have to make up for.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):
Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I am the critic for this portfolio, so within half an hour I'll be able to respond to the member from Richmond Hill, who is the parliamentary assistant, and offer a different point of view in terms of what he heard and what I heard.

I was in committee, of course, and there were the colleges who came and everybody else, and there were two different points of view: one from the colleges and one from the rest of the community supporting part-time and sessional workers and part-time academics. I want to be able to speak to that and see whether our ideas coalesce in some way, based on what I heard. Within half an hour, I'll be able to do that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: It is a pleasure for me to provide a couple comments on what I thought was an excellent speech by the member from Richmond Hill. The member from Richmond Hill is a highly qualified engineer in Canada's nuclear industry, and he is a gentleman when he talks to his constituents in Richmond Hill about the need for a continuous education as we all meet new challenges in Ontario's and Canada's economy.

In my own riding of Peterborough, we have Fleming College, which was founded in the mid-1960's. Over the five years that I've had the great privilege of representing the riding of Peterborough, I spent a lot of time at Fleming College, under the very able leadership of Dr. Tony Tilley—an opportunity to talk to those part-time lecturers, many of whom had had very distinguished careers in business and in other professions in Peterborough. After they retired, they moved into the community college to provide expertise to those young, ambitious students who want to soak up the great knowledge these people have.

So it came to the conclusion, when they chatted with me, about the need to organize these part-time lecturers under OPSEU. Just a couple of weeks ago, I met with a representative from OPSEU in Peterborough to talk about the need for Bill 90 and the great foundation that was led by Kevin Whitaker—he will take on another assignment in the near future setting up the college of trades in Ontario. We feel that Bill 90 will certainly meet a number of the objectives that have been outlined by those part-time lecturers. I think that Ontario is perhaps one of the last provinces to organize this particular group of professionals, who certainly look forward to being organized and having the benefits of getting their first collective agreement. We feel that this is a very positive piece of legislation, and the member from Richmond Hill has done a great job of articulating the positive nature of this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): The member for Nepean—Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: One of the wonderful things that we, in the Conservative Party, are proud of is the vision of the honourable Bill Davis, who brought in the community college system in this province. Bill Davis was a visionary, and he created many things in this province

that many successive governments, including this particular Liberal government, are benefiting from.

I wanted to touch on a comment that my colleague made with respect to the second-career strategy, which is employed by this Liberal government, because it is a bone of contention with me. As I mentioned during the budget in 2008—and I will continue to remind people about this—that money, the centrepiece of your budget, that \$353 million you are investing, is actually federal money. It came from the community heritage trust—\$355 million—that Prime Minister Harper invested through \$1 billion into communities right across Canada. The allotment that came to Ontario was \$355 million. It came from that source, and I think that is a very important point to make. The centrepiece of this Liberal budget in 2008 actually came from federal Conservative coffers. I just want to make that point.

The final point that I want to make is that we, in the Conservative Party, are disappointed that the government chose not to address the concerns raised by the colleges in committee. We are generally supportive of this bill and—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: The Liberal Party.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Pardon me?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: You said the Conservative—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The Conservative Party is disappointed in the Liberal government. We're always disappointed in this Liberal government, though we are generally supportive of the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): The member for Richmond Hill for a response.

Mr. Reza Moridi: I want to thank my colleagues from all parties who made remarks about this bill. Bill 90 is based on the commitment the Premier made almost a year ago. It will provide bargaining rights and the ability to unionize for part-time workers, both academic and support staff, in our college system. I'm proud that this bill is in the House for discussion today. Hopefully it will pass, and 17,000 employees, on both the staff side and the academic side, will benefit from the outcome of this bill.

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The bill will provide stability to our college system. Our students are the focus of attention in every educational institution—and I'm saying this as a former academic, as a former educator myself. The students are the focus of attention in every college, university and school. This bill, if passed, will bring more stability and peace of mind to educators and students in our college system.

With regard to the question that was raised by the member opposite, there will be four bargaining units, two for part-time workers and two for full-time workers. Each of them will be separate for academic staff and support staff. Therefore, there will be no contradiction in terms of their interests. Each group will obviously have their own specific interests. For that reason, Kevin Whitaker recommended in his report that we have four bargaining units: two for academic staff, part-time and full-time; and two for support staff, part-time and full-time.

With regard to a pension question which came up, this was excluded from this act. It will be covered by other regulations and acts.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm wondering if I could have unanimous consent to defer the leadoff on this. It's Mr. Wilson's.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): The member for Simcoe North has asked for unanimous consent to defer the lead. Is that agreeable? Okay, it's deferred.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I know that my colleague from Simcoe-Grey would very much appreciate that. He's going through a very difficult time with the passing of his father. It was nice to see the House acknowledge that this morning in a moment of silence.

I'm pleased to say a few words today on Bill 90, An Act to enact the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act, 2008, to repeal the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act and to make related amendments to other Acts. The short title of this bill is the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act, 2008. I'm not sure how many people have not been lobbied on this, but over the last couple of years, this has been legislation about which we've had a local lobby from a group of instructors from across the province who have come to most of our offices in our constituencies. Generally speaking, I think most people agree with the contents of this bill and will agree that as we move forward, we should do it.

Before I get into that, I know that we normally ask for permission to introduce people, but I do have with me today someone I didn't get an opportunity to introduce earlier. In the members' west gallery are Don Willis; his wife, Tracy Cain; and their son MacKenzie Willis, and I'd like to introduce them. They've been with me today, and they're enjoying Queen's Park. They're actually from North Bay, but they have a lot of connections to the Simcoe county area.

I am really happy to take part in this debate. I know that as we look at the bill, it's really, again, about fairness. We have so many instructors across our province. I know what Kevin Whitaker faced was clearly a challenge. The recommendations he's brought forward are fair and reasonable, and I believe that most people will be accepting them, with all the bargaining units, the colleges etc.

No question at all, the biggest area will be whatever additional costs are borne by the impact of this legislation. That additional money will have to come from the Ontario provincial government, because if it's going to cost a college—say for example, Georgian College, Canadore or whatever it may be—another half a million dollars a year or \$300,000, whatever it may be to make sure that this legislation is implemented properly, it doesn't come out of the other operating costs; this is additional money that will be required on top of the funding they now get. Although the government brags

about putting this additional money into the college system, I can tell you most of the college systems are in near-deficit positions or in deficit positions, so as they move forward they are having some challenges, but at the same time I think the college system has done a remarkable job here in the province of Ontario.

The member from Nepean-Carleton mentioned earlier the Honourable William Davis.

I can remember, being quite young at the time that the community college system started, how a lot of people knew nothing about it. Originally, when they used to call them colleges of applied arts and technology, I felt that a lot of them were there strictly for a technical type of programming, sort of a continuation of the apprenticeships or the trades classes you would see at the secondary school level. However, they have developed into great organizations throughout the province, and most of the colleges have had some fairly major expansions since their incorporation. I believe most of them are around 40 years old. I think they were established in 1966, 1967 or 1968, in that period there. Most of them have done remarkably well.

One of the things I wanted to point out was just how important they are, because we have so many community colleges across the province, and most of them have satellite campuses. For Georgian College, the one in Simcoe county, we have the main campus in Barrie, but we also have campuses in Orillia and Midland. On top of that, they have expanded and have campuses in Owen Sound, I believe in Alliston, Collingwood and Bracebridge. They've been very positive in their communities.

One thing that's remarkable is that a lot of the students at the colleges, along with the instructors, take part in many different community events. I think of the Santa Claus parades, for example, or fundraising events for different gala evenings etc. that we see in support of the Relay for Life, the Terry Fox run, these types of things. This past weekend we had the dragon boat race in the city of Orillia. It was put on by the Orillia and area community foundations, and Georgian College had a team in that. It was a day-long experience. A lot of part-time staff, administrators, full-time staff and some of the students took part in it. It was a day out of their lives, but in the end they probably raised \$2,000, \$3,000 or \$4,000 for the community's foundation, and that money is distributed to different organizations in need in the community.

I see that on a continuing basis, and I think that's what is important. We talk about the value of colleges for education, but quite often we forget to think about how important they are to the communities they represent. In a lot of our communities, the only form of post-secondary education we get is with our community college system.

I want to mention quite a few things today around Georgian College. I agree with the legislation. I agree with most of the comments made by the parliamentary assistant. I think they were positive. In the end, we're all going to support this legislation as long as there's money there to implement it.

I look at the Georgian College campus in Barrie. Over the last 10 years, Georgian College in Barrie has had something like an average of approximately 94% of its students getting full-time work within six months of graduation, and that's remarkable. You can understand how many young people, not only at Georgian but at all the other community colleges we have, are working across this province, because of the fine work they do and the real on-the-job training they get at the community college level.

In my first term after I was elected, I was proud that we were able to fund something along the lines of \$24 million to an expansion of a library-type facility—a sort of futuristic library, I would call it, more than anything—at Georgian College. It was funded by the provincial and federal governments of the time. It has been put to good use, and to this day I continue to thank Minister Dianne Cunningham for her input into that.

I did want to say a few things about the Orillia and Midland campuses, because I work very closely with those two campuses as well, and I'm very proud of the relationship I've had with them.

When I came to the area in 1999 as a new MPP, I looked at the Orillia campus. At that time, I believe 600 spaces were available for additional students but they weren't being utilized. The Midland campus was simply a couple of classrooms behind the local radio station in Midland. You couldn't call them really full-time campuses or anything like that. They were certainly campuses that needed a lot of upgrading. Very early in my first term I talked to the president, Brian Tamblyn, who is still the president and CEO today, and asked him what we could do. He could have my full support of the college as long as we could also see the satellite campuses like Orillia, Midland, Bracebridge and Collingwood moved ahead into the future as well.

1440

The Orillia campus today is completely full. It has, I believe, over 3,000 students today. They just had a major expansion to the veterinary technician course, and they've opened up some new classrooms by moving the marine technology programs from Orillia to Midland; it's created all this additional space. So right now the building is at capacity. I think, under the leadership of Dean Dubois of the Orillia campus, they should be very proud of what they have accomplished and what they've got to look forward to in the future.

I'm just thinking of the local federal election that's on right now. I recently read in the paper that the community college, Georgian College, is having an all-candidates meeting. That's the type of thing they do at the Orillia campus. That's for the provincial, federal and municipal elections. They usually try to hold an all-candidate's meeting and get the students out to take part, which I think it is very important to our community.

I want to move over for a second. More of a success story than even Orillia is the new campus we have in the town of Midland. We call it the Robbert Hartog building, named just recently in memory of Robbert Hartog, a

philanthropist and businessman from our community who passed away just a year ago, who donated many, many dollars to different organizations basically throughout the town of Midland and indeed around the world. Originally, Robbert Hartog and Reinhart Weber from Weber tool and die had established an industrial research and development institute that was set up by the federal government. It's a beautiful facility, but it never really took off to its full potential because many of the automotive manufacturers did their own research and development, and they never got into a lot of the full programming that they could have gone with. However, with this building in the community, arrangements were made to purchase it through Georgian College, and it's now an Ontario skilled trades centre. I had a tour the other day. I know Minister Bentley is in the House today and he's actually been there in the past. We're talking about the Georgian College Skilled Trades Centre in Midland. We're very, very proud of that.

I was up there the other day. I'm not going to tell you what the trade is in the House, but we took a potential trades course up to Midland and had a long visit last Wednesday morning. I can tell you that we witnessed a number of young electrician apprentices, people both male and female who are taking their apprenticeship courses. I believe that something like 400 electrical apprentices will go through that trade centre this year. They've now established the plumbing course; they've got a whole section in the facility for people taking their plumbing apprenticeships to rough in sort of a model home. This is just so they can get the experience of doing it.

They've got one of the only courses I believe in the province on recreational vehicles. There are so many recreational vehicles, RVs, that we have in our province today with our tourism industry etc. People can actually take courses there to be fully qualified to repair the propane lines, the electrical lines, the plumbing lines etc. in these recreational vehicles. It's hard to get people with those qualifications and the know-how.

I ran into a gentleman the other day who was running a welding program there. Of course, one of the things we got when we moved the marine technology program from Orillia to Midland was a new partnership with the Ontario Marine Operators Association, which is an organization that believes very strongly in green technology around marinas. They've done a phenomenal job and they are a major partner in this program.

It was really something to see, when you look at the equipment they have to work with, sort of a shop where they can work on all kinds of outboard motors and inboard motors. They've all got pipes hooked up to them so that the fumes are pumped to the outside and it won't hurt any of the students working inside.

They have the same thing in a motorcycle shop where they were repairing small engines on all types of motorcycles. Someone made an amazing deal with Harley-Davidson, because in the building, on loan from Harley-Davidson, there are probably 30 Harleys sitting there.

Any of us would like any one of them, especially in this nice weather we've had where you can tour around.

I just wanted to put all these things on the record for the Midland campus because it's something that Ontario should be proud of. The work they've done there is starting to equal what they've done at colleges like George Brown that have been in that sort of programming for years and years.

I think that almost anybody in this room could stand up and say how proud they are of the colleges in their specific communities. I can tell you that I think this is one of the key things about this debate time—I think we're going to support this legislation, but I think that this is a good opportunity for anybody who wants to talk about their community college system and about the staff they have, about the kind of workers they have, about their success stories. This is the time to come and do it, when we're in debate like this. That's why I've said today and I continue to say today that not only are they there for the education and for the helping of all of the different programs they have to offer, but they also are key parts of the community. It's always great to see them at chamber events, fundraising events. The leadership shown by the administration and by the instructors rubs off on the students, and I think overall it makes for a better community and for a better province as well.

In summary, I just wanted to say that I'll be supporting this legislation. I think it's a step in the right direction.

I do want to re-emphasize once again the importance of the foresight of Bill Davis. It is important that we've had people in our province like that in the past who have had a vision for a specific need in our community, in our province, and they've come forward. Now, 40 years later, we've got what is probably one of the better post-secondary education systems in the world, partly because of our community college system.

That's all I'm going to say today. I appreciate this opportunity and look forward to debate from other members here as we move forward with this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'll be speaking in about eight minutes or so, and I don't want to tire myself out, but I want to congratulate the students from Charles G. Fraser, along with the four teachers and the two or three parents, for coming just to listen to the kinds of debates that we have, because I'm convinced they're learning as we speak.

We've heard from the member from Simcoe North about how proud he is of the college system, and they all have a story to tell about the colleges and what they do. That's what the member from Simcoe North did, which is good.

I'll offer a different perspective to be helpful to the diversity of debate, and I hope that the teachers, students and parents are going to stick around to be able to hear that diverse point of view.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Reza Moridi: I would like to begin by thanking our Premier, who, a year ago, made the commitment that this government is going to provide the right to part-time workers in the college system to bargain collectively.

I also want to thank Minister Milloy, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, and his staff at the ministry and the minister's office for bringing forward this bill.

I would also like to thank the committee members from all three parties who have—

Interjection.

Mr. Reza Moridi:—and yourself too—and all parties who contributed to the refinement of this bill, and also the stakeholders, who worked very hard and guided us through the process of preparing this bill.

1450

I want to echo the statements by the member from Simcoe North about our college system, and I commend him for talking about the excellent work our college system has been doing. Since I became a member of Parliament and parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, and being a former academic, as I said earlier, I've had the opportunity to visit three colleges: George Brown College, Seneca College, and, by the way, the Bill Davis campus of Sheridan college. I was very much impressed by the work our college system and our students, our academics, have been doing. They are doing an excellent job, and our colleges have gained an international reputation. I've heard this from many, many people in my previous career, that our colleges, in one or several areas, have really gained an international reputation. We are proud of these colleges and their administration, profs and academics, students and support workers who work together to train the best workforce and knowledgeable students and a well-trained workforce for our economy.

The bill before us today modernizes the current collective bargaining act. This bill will basically take us into the 21st century. That's what we needed to have in our college system. Our—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. Questions and comments? The member for Sarnia-Lambton.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Go get 'em, Bob.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you.

I'd like to commend the member from Simcoe-Grey for his remarks about the college system. We also in Sarnia-Lambton are the proud recipients of a college system, Lambton College. It was established—one of the earliest systems—by the Honourable William Davis when he was Minister of Education. It also provides many benefits to the people in Sarnia-Lambton. We've got many ongoing relationships with local industry and with the labour community. There are a number of training centres that we've established there, a number of apprentices who are moving through that and continuing their education in the education system.

I was on the committee from our side of the House with the honourable Mr. Wilson, Jim Wilson, and we did

put forward a number of amendments. The government, in their wisdom, chose not to accept those, but we still, in spirit, support the principle of the bill. I think it's long overdue that the part-time instructors are recognized, that they are able to bargain with the full-time people, and this will probably lead to more congenial relations between the staff. We have, as I say, many important relationships with the local community in Sarnia-Lambton and I want to see those fostered and continued.

As the member from Simcoe North expressed, there will be additional costs. We hope that the government will be able to help those colleges, especially in Sarnia-Lambton—and the rest of the province—meet those costs, because there will be additional burdens on them. They told us in the hearings that they are at the wire now; they're having a problem meeting their budget.

So at that, I will adjourn and listen to the rest of the speeches.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. Questions and comments?

To the member for Simcoe North for a response.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to thank the members from Trinity-Spadina—I look forward to some of his comments coming up in a minute and a half now—from Richmond Hill and also from Sarnia-Lambton.

I think what I really want to say is that I meant everything I said in my debate. I think that if you're an elected member here and you are not working closely with your community colleges, you are probably not doing a very thorough job. I'm in my 10th year now, but I've found that one of the areas that I enjoy most about the job is going to the community colleges. I'm probably also asked three or four times a year at least to go and speak to classes on a specific topic. I spent a couple of hours here at Georgian College in Orillia a couple of weeks ago talking to a social sciences class, a bunch of young people who would be social workers in the future. They had a lot of comments and a lot of questions and a lot of positive feedback as well, giving me constructive criticism on our system.

So as we watch this college system grow and we appreciate the instructors and the administration we have—I think it's very positive for the province of Ontario and for our communities. I just want to stress again that I think one of the best things that has happened is that these small community colleges have been able to provide a level of post-secondary education that didn't exist in a lot of small communities prior to the vision that was set forth by our former Premier, William Davis, and his team.

Thank you, and I look forward to the next speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm happy to have the lead-off to debate Bill 90, An Act to enact the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act. I want to begin by commenting on the preamble that the member from Richmond Hill gave, prior to speaking about Bill 90. I want to do the same: talk about that, and then talk about the background

of Bill 90 in terms of what we had, the bill and what we think should have been added to make this bill much more effective from a union perspective, obviously.

I want to begin by saying that the Richmond Hill member is very proud of the fact that the Liberals have committed \$6.2 billion over a four-year period that will end in 2009-10. It's not really \$6.2 billion, but in terms of how they add it up, mathematically it's \$6.2 billion. One need not try to explain that and confuse people even more, but let's just say, for the sake of it, that they're giving \$6.2 billion. What I want to say, as Liberals are cozy and proud of themselves with that figure, is that in spite of the \$6.2 billion they are giving, we are number 10, numéro dix, numero dieci on the scale of per capita funding in Canada. That means that of all the provinces in Canada, we are last in per capita funding.

Government can be very happy with itself, being number 10—i.e., last. But I don't think you should be proud of that, and you keep doing this over and over again. I'm so happy that we have a parliamentary channel that people can watch on channel 105 in many parts of Ontario, because they get to see and hear the different points of view from the different political parties.

Being number 10 in per capita funding means that you don't give enough resources to the college and university system to allow them to do what they need to do to be competitive in Canada, to be competitive with the US and to be competitive with the world. So even though Liberals use the language "funding to be competitive," how can you be competitive if you are last? Remember that Ontario is still, in spite of its economic difficulties of late, one of the most powerful provinces in Canada, not just numerically but economically. While we are close to being in a recession, and while we will recover in time, we in this province are still strong as an economic power.

To hear the Liberals talk about funding for our colleges and universities, you would think we are number one in per capita funding to our university and college system. But I remind Liberals and others watching that you have a record you cannot be proud of, and you ought to be embarrassed about your record. Your record means that you are in government. That's what counts. What counts is your record in government. What counts is what you say versus what you actually do, and what you say is always better than what actually gets delivered to the system.

I've got to tell you this, because you need to coil; you need to creep under the carpet when I say these things. You need to skulk; you need to hide from yourselves and from the public. I say this with all due respect, of course. Clearly, you are all doing your best. But it would be nice, as you do your best, if you were able to admit publicly what you are actually doing, rather than manufacturing something that isn't entirely the case. So we have a college system that's incredibly underfunded, I dare say more underfunded than the university system. I dare say they're both underfunded, but colleges more so. And in the last 12, 13 or 14 years we've had an increasing number of students attend our college system, but the funding

from both the previous government—i.e., the Conservative one—and the funding from the current government—i.e., the Liberals—is not keeping pace with the actual enrolment. What does it mean? It means that they are underfunded. What does that mean? It means they cannot provide the programs they desperately need to be competitive in Canada vis-à-vis other provinces, the US, Europe and others. Do you understand that, member from Richmond Hill? You know that because you've taught, right?

1500

Mr. Reza Moridi: I am listening.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But you also taught, as I understand it.

Mr. Reza Moridi: Oh, yes.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: If the member from Richmond Hill taught, then he would know that his system was underfunded by a couple of previous governments. You can't state the party line and forget your experience in terms of what actually happened to you when you were teaching there. So for you to pretend that that doesn't exist is not helpful to the argument.

We've had colleges for years coming to make deputations at Queen's Park, pleading with the previous government, pleading with this current government for extra money. The member from Richmond Hill says, "Yes, we're helping. We've got a Reaching Higher plan, and it's \$6.2 billion." Okay. That money was intended to bring us to the average, it was intended to lift Ontario into the middle of the pack, and it hasn't done any of that. We are still number 10. That worries me, and it ought to worry people who worry about colleges, many of the Conservative members who were talking about how great the colleges are and all the great things they're doing. They cannot do a great job if they're underfunded. They cannot provide the program they want to provide if they're underfunded.

I say that when you look at the quality indicators such as class size and student-faculty ratio, they are deteriorating in this province in a very troubling way. In fact, our student-faculty ratio is the worst in the country. Yes, the student-faculty ratio is the worst in the country. Is that something to be proud of? No. So those who teach in colleges and universities cannot be saying it. I know they're not saying it. I know because, when they talk to me, they say, "We're worried about the quality indicators." And the government should worry that when you look at the quality indicators, you're not doing very well.

Further, how can you be proud of those things? I say that during this period of global economic challenge, your government is failing our universities and colleges just when we need them. Just when we have to compete in a global economy, just when we need skilled and knowledge workers so we can prevail in that competition, just when our manufacturing sector, long the stay of Ontario's prosperity, is disappearing, that's when we need governments most. To hear the member from Richmond Hill say it, he's dealing with all the questions I'm

raising. I'm saying that he and you, Liberal members and ministers and Premier, are not. We have one of the highest tuition rates in the country. We have deregulated law and medicine, engineering and many other professions, and deregulation—it was started by the Conservatives when Mike Harris was here—means that universities and colleges can charge whatever fee they believe they can charge to students as a tuition fee. It means it's not capped. It means they're able to charge as much as they want.

For law at U of T, they're now spending \$19,000 just to get in—excluding books, excluding the extra fee if you have to move from one city and come and live in Toronto. You understand, it gets to be a very expensive problemo. If you're paying close to \$20,000 in tuition fees a year, excluding books—and books are expensive in engineering, law and medicine, aren't they? Sure they are—and if you've got to move from one city to the other because you need to stay in some flat, you've got to pay. I dare say that it's got to be anywhere from \$5,000 to \$8,000, depending on where you're living. So at the end of it, you're paying \$30,000 or so every year, and to be a lawyer takes a whole lot of years: two years, at least, undergraduate and four years in law school—six long years. It gets to be pretty expensive. This is law at U of T. In medicine, it's anywhere from \$14,000 to \$16,000 to \$17,000, and the books in medicine are probably even more expensive than they are for law school. The books for engineering are just as expensive. To be in a dentistry program, you're paying \$12,000 to \$15,000 a year in tuition fees, depending on what university you're going to. Do you get the picture?

You have placed an incredible debt burden on students that we have never, ever seen before. The serious deregulation and the serious burden happened under the Conservative government, under Mike Harris. Mercifully he's no longer here. John Tory is a nicer man. I think he's a nicer guy. I think his policies are a little nicer than Mike Harris's, but thank God Mike Harris is gone. Bye-bye, I say, and amen to Mike.

But then you've got the Liberals coming into power, and the Liberals froze tuition fees for two years. They said, "Yes, we've done it. We kept our promise." And then what do they do after the two years? Tuition fees more than double, because at least Mike Harris, with all due respect, froze tuition fees just before the election, because he was a bit nervous and worried. So he capped tuition fees. If we had capped tuition fees, i.e., the Liberals, when they got into power, we would have been paying less in tuition fees had we not frozen tuition fees for two years. Why? Because after the two-year lifting of the tuition freeze, we are now in a regime where students get whacked by close to 5% in tuition fee increases when they go to university—whacked, I say. And you understand what that means: "Whacked" means they're paying a whole lot of money in tuition fees every year since the Liberals came into power—close to 5% a year, you understand. It's more than what the Tories did in their final dying days when they capped tuition fees at inflationary rates.

We are in an economy where we, as consumers, have incredible debt as parents, as individuals. Students now have and are amassing incredible, huge debts from which there is no relief and from which they will never escape, because when you leave university in a general program—forget about lawyers, engineers, dentists and doctors—your average debt is about \$23,000, \$24,000, \$25,000. If you marry someone else who was a university student—let's say in a general program, four years; I don't know, French, English, philosophy, geography, let's say—you have a combined debt of \$50,000, just to be modest, unless you've got a rich mom and pop who are able to pay for you, a rich member of provincial Parliament who doesn't have to worry about whether their investment savings have just slipped though the crash, because today the TSX went down 600 points.

Some of you are probably okay because you own two homes, some of you have different professions, some of your spouses have extra money, and some of you have pensions from previous employment. God bless those of you who've got the extra bucks. But the majority of people—honest working people—cannot afford to help their kids. That means they are on their own. So when you start working at very low wages, because unless you are into a high-level profession which pays well, and your average salary is anywhere from \$35,000 to \$50,000—in fact, one of my children is a teacher and the other two are working in an insurance company. One of them is making close to \$33,000 and the other one about \$37,000, just out of university. Who knows where their salaries might end up? If they're lucky they might be, I don't know, eventually in the \$60,000 range?

1510

Mr. Jeff Leal: Eighty thousand.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Oh, you think \$80,000? God bless. I hope that becomes a reality. Keep praying, because I'm worried.

If these young people have debts of 25,000 bucks, and their salary as they come out of university is \$30,000, \$32,000, \$33,000, \$35,000—what do you do with \$32,000 or \$35,000? Can you pay your rent if you're alone? Can you pay for the purchase of a car? Can you afford a car? Let's say a second-hand car might cost you \$12,000, unless you're buying a real jalopy—and then you're into big costs because that old jalopy requires more maintenance and so on—but anywhere from 10,000, let's say, to 20,000 bucks. You're paying some money on that car, you're paying some of your income on your rent, and then you're paying some of that money to maybe clothe yourself, which might not be such a bad thing, and maybe to feed yourself, because I think that's helpful to stay healthy. You need a couple of bucks to stay healthy. So at the end of that, where does \$35,000 take you? I know that most members who earn over \$100,000 here say, "I don't earn enough; I can't make ends meet." Well, if you can't make ends meet with \$100,000 or more, how can a person making \$34,000 or \$35,000 make ends meet? Do you understand? You are burdening our young people with incredible debts that

they will never be able to repay. I often use my example of someone who had a debt of \$1,700, and I thought I could never pay it back, and it took me a long time to pay it back. How are young people with debts of \$25,000 to \$100,000 ever going to pay off their debts? You are free of interest rate taxation until six months of leaving as a student, and then you've got to start paying the higher rates. How can students afford to pay these things, and how can governments feel good about themselves, saying, "Oh, we have a greater participation rate of students than ever, and that's all that matters. Students are coming in; therefore we, as a government, are doing well"? How can you use that as an indicator of how well you are doing as a government? Students are entering universities and colleges because they feel they need to, and if they don't, they will be left out of our changing economy. That's why they go, not because of your policies. They go because they're desperate and they know that unless they have one or two or three degrees and are constantly learning through continuing education, they may be left out of this economy. That's why they go, not because of anything you're doing as a government.

So I can't help but do this little attack on the Liberals when they pat themselves on the back. I know how hard it is for you to hear it, but I've got to tell you. I feel like I have a duty to tell you.

I'll talk about the colleges in a moment, because I want to talk about the background to Bill 90 briefly before I make references to the colleges. The colleges, in committee, for those of you who were there, were saying, "We're worried about this bill." They all stated that they support the principles of the bill, but then they talked about what worries they have about the bill and potential changes that could have been made. But I want to speak briefly to Bill 90, because Bill 90 is a typical Liberal bill. How is that typical? Is there a typical way the Liberals behave? Yes, there is. I want to explain that and expound a little bit.

What the Liberals have done through Bill 90 is to give a little to, in this case, let's say, the unions, but not too much, and give a little to the colleges who are unhappy, but not hurt them too much. So it's a bill that never goes too far to the left and never goes too far to the right and just saddles itself on that nice little fence, a not too pointy fence, and feels comfortable sitting there, saying, "Yeah, we got it right."

So the unions are able to say to us—meaning you, Liberals—"That was good that you did this, by the way, to give us collective bargaining rights," and you're able to go to the colleges and say, "We didn't hurt you too much, did we?" And they say, "Well, it's hurtful but it could have been worse."

So Liberals find this neat little niche, this neat little way of trying not to hurt themselves politically too much, and Bill 90 is typical of that approach. Bill 90 gives collective rights to part-time academics in the college system and to non-faculty workers, i.e. the support staff. This is good.

It took a while. It took a long while, in fact. I introduced a bill that would give collective bargaining rights to college teachers and part-time support staff, and each time I presented the bill, there was not a peep from any Liberal. Not a word. No Liberal spoke. No Liberal said, "We should take Marchese's bill and make it law." No Liberal said, "We should support it so it gets to second reading so that we can deal with it." Not one Liberal.

For two and a half years, I did that with my bill. I did that with the support of OPSECAAT, the Organization of Part-time and Sessional Employees of the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology. And I say they did the dirty work of working and trying to organize the college professors. They did that work, not me. All I did was say, "You're right. Here's my bill to help you initiate a debate here at Queen's Park."

It was hard, minister of la francophonie. It was hard. I have to tell you why: because there were so many part-time college teachers who were afraid to speak up. You understand, 40%, 45%, 50% of college teachers and 20% of university faculty members are part-time. Why are they part-time? Because colleges haven't been getting the money they need to be able to hire full-time staff. So what do they do? Inevitably, inexorably, they hire part-time workers because they don't have any money to hire full-time staff.

So the part-time college teacher is afraid to say boo, because they have no rights. They had no bargaining rights for a long time, and if they were to speak up and should they have spoken up in a way that people would know about, that the colleges would know about, they would have put themselves at risk. You understand? You've got no collective bargaining rights, you're part-time, you're doing work sometimes that is full load even though you are part-time, and you cannot complain. Why? Because there are always plenty of part-time college professors who are willing to step in and do the work. So it was hard for the Organization of Part-time and Sessional Employees of the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology to organize in that context, in a culture of fear.

I used to think the culture of fear existed only under Mike Harris. Ah, not true. Ce n'est pas vrai. It's equally true under the Liberals. The image held by the public is that it cannot be; it cannot be that under a Liberal administration people are afraid to speak up. And yet it's true. And why is it true? Because people like Marchese were talking to the college teachers. As we met, we talked to them. We even talked to people who said, "We are afraid." I even talked to college teachers who said they talked to part-timers who were afraid to speak up.

How many Liberal members were doing that kind of chit-chat with part-time college professors?

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The member from Ottawa—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Ottawa—Vanier.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Voilà. Voilà. And my friend from Peterborough, yes? And you too?

Mr. Mario Sergio: I'm here.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I know you're here, but I was asking whether you were speaking to some of the college teachers.

I expect the minister of les francophones, of whom I'm a big supporter, to do a two-minute response to me telling me the kinds of discussions you had with part-time teachers vis-à-vis what I was saying, that they weren't afraid to speak up, that in fact the people you spoke to were doing that very openly with you and others. And you, the member from Peterborough, said you pretty well had the same experience. Is that correct?

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Mr. Jeff Leal: I talk to them all the time.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You talk to them all the time. So I expect a two-minute rebuttal, saying, "Marchese, you're wrong. They were not afraid. In fact, in my area they spoke up." That's what I want to hear, because then I'll match your comments to OPSECAAT experience—that is, the Organization of Part-Time and Sessional Employees of the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology—to see whether the experience in Peterborough and Ottawa and so on was the same as theirs. I suggest to you that you are not giving us the complete rundown of your talks with the teachers.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: That's a little strong.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: That was so polite; I don't even know how to be more polite than that.

So the problem is that it was hard to be able to organize the part-time teachers. It was shameful—I have to admit it's shameful—that in 2008 we had to wait so long to allow part-time college teachers and part-time support staff to organize, one of the few groups in Canada without the right to do so, the only province where part-time college employees have been excluded from collective bargaining. It took a long while to push Liberals because, once they do it, they say, "It was always all part of the plans." But they have been stalling for so long. They have been stalling for two and a half years.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Remember, what matters is what you are doing in government. We have to match your words to your actions. I think that's important. So for two and a half years they have been stalling. Why? Because they are saying to themselves: "Hmm, this is going to cost a fair bit, this Bill 90. It's going to cost a lot." How do we know this? Because when we talk to the colleges, they tell us, "Hmm, this is going to cost a lot." So what is their reaction, a typical Liberal reaction? "Let's stall as long as we possibly can"—which they did. Then they had Mr. Whitaker do a report. You understand that when you ask somebody to do a report, it's another six months to a year. It's beautiful, right? You know what he's going to tell you; that's why you appointed him. But in appointing him, it takes close to a year and then another half a year to stall, because you have got to consider it, right? Even Mr. Whitaker said, "There is no justification for excluding these employees from collective bargaining. Part-time employees should immediately be granted the right to unionize." He said, "immediately

be granted the right to unionize.” From “immediately,” it took yet another six to eight months to introduce their bill by the pushing of the Organization of Part-Time and Sessional Employees, pushing of OPSEU, the union, and pushing by people like me to persuade the Liberal government to move with a bill.

They eventually do, and Liberals are cozy and happy about that. Because it doesn't matter about the stalling and waiting for two and a half years; it's not about that. It's about the government eventually giving a bill that gives collective bargaining rights to part-time teachers and to part-time support staff, and now they're happy: “We've done the job. We can go home now.” That's the attitude of the Liberal government.

What did the various colleges say when they came to the committee? I say this because I want to give you the context of serious underfunding of the college sector, which they speak to. I'll try to be as precise as I possibly can. I'm not going to name the colleges, because it's unfair to the colleges I name, because I don't name them all.

One college says the following—they all support the bill, by the way. They all support collective bargaining rights. Each and every college says that. They say that at the outset. They don't waste any time saying it. But as you get into the body of their reports—just to remind the member from Richmond Hill, there were two kinds of deputants: the college teachers, the colleges, and the others who supported the bill and wanted to make it stronger. There were no in-betweens. The member from Richmond Hill made the suggestion that there were all different kinds of deputants and that they all had different views. No. I have the list here. We had colleges and then we had the others who wanted to strengthen the bill. One college says the following: “Several colleges, including our own, are experiencing severe fiscal pressures and may even be facing deficits, in spite of all efforts....

“This bill will add more pressure.” Colleges do not have the fiscal room necessary to implement this legislation. “In addition to the important issues I have raised in this brief, I am calling on the government to fund the implementation of the bill,” as the entire college board of governors agrees “that the cost implications across our system are unsustainable.”

In keeping with other sectors of the economy, compensation costs, including salaries, wages and benefits, are the largest expense item for colleges. There is no question that the government, in implementing this legislation, will need to recognize and respond to its financial implications. There is no room in college budgets to absorb more costs.

I recognize that how we do this in the economy we are facing today will be a tremendous challenge, but colleges are completely unable to shoulder new costs. The government must be aware of this in adding new costs to the system. As a result, I must again caution the government about the financial implications attached to OPSEU's proposed changes—changes that were not proposed during the consultation process that led to the creation of

this bill and therefore could not be given appropriate consideration or weight. This is one college system saying, “The funding you give us is inadequate at the moment. Even to implement Bill 90 as it is requires additional funding. To even contemplate other changes would make it worse.” Thus, most colleges objected to any of the changes that I will have time to speak to, at least a couple of major ones.

What does it mean? It means that the colleges and the government had an understanding that there would be no other changes to the bill and that what they produced in Bill 90 would not only suffice but would have to do, because there would be no other changes from the Liberals. That was already set in stone.

Here's another college that says, “Although we are grateful ... for the government's investments in its 2005 Reaching Higher plan, there are significant funding challenges that we are facing across the system. Funding for colleges is not sufficient to enable us to sustain and build upon the programs and services students and employers demand. Several colleges, including our own, are experiencing severe fiscal pressures and may even be facing deficits, in spite of all efforts.”

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I think the member from Richmond Hill, hopefully, is getting a sense of a pattern in terms of what colleges were saying. You heard it and I heard it—that's why I'm reading it again, for your benefit. Colleges are saying, “We are under severe financial strain,” and they're also saying, “We may not be able to avoid deficits.” The way colleges have avoided deficits in the past is to continue slashing as much as they possibly can in order to comply with the laws that do not permit deficits in the college system.

Another college says: “I would like to reiterate the point from the perspective of our board. I am certain that many of you in this committee have spoken with your local college president and board chair”—he assumes we're doing that, and he assumes that many Liberal members are doing that—“and are aware of the financial challenges we face.” He assumes that many Liberal members are aware of the financial challenges, but I'm not sure they are. Then the person says, “I cannot overstate the seriousness of this challenge for all of us or the consequences to our local communities and businesses if colleges are asked to shoulder additional costs without additional funds. We've made tough decisions in an attempt to balance our books, but the reality is that there are no funds left, particularly to implement this legislation.

“I would be irresponsible as a board chair if I did not tell you today that the government must commit to funding the changes this new legislation will bring about, because in the absence of that funding we will be required to make financial decisions across the college system that will have a profound impact on our communities, our students, and your ability to deliver on your commitment to a highly skilled workforce. Financial challenges in the Ontario college system already exist,

and this bill, if underfunded, will only make a serious situation that much more severe.”

Why do I do this? I do this to tell you that there is a pattern. The colleges came to that committee committed, to a person, to not supporting any other change that OPSEU was recommending because to do so would, in their minds, incur more financial costs to the college system and they simply could not deal with it. My personal view, as I indicated to a few colleges, is that they would probably have supported some of the changes that unions were recommending, but in view of the fiscal realities of underfunding by this current government, they simply could not support even amendments they could live with individually as colleges.

I know that. I talked to a few of them. They can't say this publicly, because even in a Liberal regime colleges are afraid to speak up. Even under a Liberal administration, university presidents are equally afraid to speak up. It's amazing to me, because my experience in this Legislature over the 18 years I have been here is to say to them, “When you're silent, you will not get what you need, you will be listened to less, you will always have the same financial pressures to deal with. Rather than being bold and daring, telling the public your experience as college or university presidents, as you see it, for which many of you would have a lot of credibility—by refusing to do so, you're undermining yourselves; your boards, who are desperately trying to balance budgets; your professors, who are trying to do the best under those conditions; those part-time professors, who often work full-time on part-time wages; and you're undermining students, who are not getting the quality attention they deserve because so many are being taught by so many part-time professors running from one place to the other that they do not have the time to offer the quality of attention the students deserve. We are undermining ourselves; we are undermining our ability to compete in these desperate times. And that's what these colleges are speaking to. So I give you only three of so many of the colleges that came to speak to the issues. I think that three is enough to be able to give you a good sense of the problems that they face in the college system.

What were some of the amendments that OPSEU wanted to make? I'll speak to a few of them. OPSECAAT—and I'll spell out the acronym again: Organization of Part-Time and Sessional Employees of the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology, represented by Roger Couvrette, who's the president, and Candy Lindsay, who's the vice-president—and those who were involved in these negotiations were supportive of having two bargaining units and not four for college workers. Bill 90's proposal to create the academic and two support bargaining units doubles the potential number of strikes or lockouts in the colleges.

“In the existing CCBA, our bargaining unit contains”—OPSECAAT here or OPSEU argues that their bargaining unit “contains both full-time and partial load workers. Partial loads are teachers who teach more than a third and up to two thirds of a full-time job and who are paid on an hourly rate—just as part-time workers are.

“Bill 90,” they say, “is not just about having a full-time faculty bargaining unit and a part-time faculty bargaining unit for each group: It is about creating a new unit with part-time and sessional teachers that would mirror the existing unit which has full-time faculty and partial load faculty. In other words,” it actually proposes “to have one group of part-timers in one bargaining unit and another group of part-timers in another.”

This government proposed to have four bargaining units instead of two. And they all said—to a person, man and woman—“We don't understand why you're doing that.” And those who worked as part-time support staff and part-time academic professors all said, “We want two units, one for academics and one for support staff.” They all said that it's the right thing to do. They all argued that it's an issue of fairness.

A basic goal of collective bargaining is the creation of common terms and conditions of employment for workers doing the same work without any discrimination. Having two bargaining units, not four, they argued, facilitates achievement of this goal. And at the level of cost, they said, “Two sets of negotiations are less expensive for the taxpayer and the workers, and accomplish the same work as four sets of negotiations.” Why go through four sets of negotiations when you can do it in two? The reason they're doing this, in my humble estimation, is that they want to make it harder for workers to organize and they want to make it very difficult for there not to be two bargaining units, but insist on having four.

The member from Richmond Hill said in committee, “Oh, but there's section 26 which explains how they could do it if they want to.” Let me read what Bill 90, as it was written, said:

“The union(s) and the council must come to the Ontario Labour Relations Board with a joint proposal to modify the makeup of one or more bargaining units.

“If different bargaining units are represented by different unions, the proposal must be supported by all unions representing any bargaining unit that is changed or modified by the proposal;

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“Both of the new part-time bargaining units must be unionized and have a collective agreement in place; and

“At least one year must have passed after Bill 90 receives royal assent.”

For those of you listening, including Liberal MPPs, when you hear that, do you understand how difficult it is to be able to comply with all of these conditions? How utterly difficult it would be to have two bargaining units rather than the four, because the conditions that they have put into place in the bill make it virtually impossible to do. Out of the four changes they proposed in committee, one of them was a technical correction because the language was just erroneous and so they had to change a word. The other three are minor, in my view. One of them deals with this. So instead of having four bargaining units, all they need now is two bargaining units to agree to a change, but you still have all of the other conditions in place and they still have to wait one full year, no matter what.

Why is it one full year and not sooner? Why not five days or 10 days or 14 days after there is agreement to proceed? Because the government doesn't want to dish out the money to have collective agreements in place for the new bargaining agents. They are stalling. They are delaying as long as they possibly can. There is no other argument. There is no logical, consistent, reasonable argument that says that once they have their vote they couldn't be able to get out there and organize right away and get the benefits they deserve. No, they have to wait a full year and then apply the other conditions that are in place, except the little, minor change that they made. Do you understand? This government is putting up barrier after barrier in order to make it impossible for unions to organize and for there to be two unions rather than the four. It's typical of what Liberal governments do. They give a little bit and then they change the rules to make it harder. They have changed the rules in many different places, and this was one of them.

Where the college workers hoped that the changes to the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act would happen, and happen quickly, where they thought that you would just have one bill that would allow people to join a union—and two, not four—it became complicated and the rules changed. That was one major change to this act that was being proposed by OPSEU in order to make it easier for themselves, to make it easier for colleges, because colleges would only have to bargain with two unions, not four. It was time-saving, it was money-saving, less labour-intensive, and yet the government decided that it would make it harder for itself, for the colleges and the new bargaining units to get what they are entitled to. That was a boggie.

I, quite frankly, never believed for a moment that the government would make that change. I knew they wouldn't do it—just too risky for them. I think it would facilitate union organizing, collective bargaining. It would probably get to an agreement real fast and it would mean that the government would be put under pressure much earlier to free up the money to be able to help the college systems. I am worried that the money is not there, not only for the changes that might have happened, if we had supported those changes, but that the money is not there even for this modest bill that this government is going to pass in this Legislature.

There's another change that the OPSEU workers wanted to make, and that has to do with collective bargaining. Here's where OPSEU says, "Bill 90 omits two key elements of the OLRA:

"S. 40 of the OLRA allows the parties to agree to go to arbitration to settle a collective agreement when both parties agree to do so. Bill 90 does not permit this.

"S. 43 of the OLRA"—the Ontario Labour Relations Act—"allows either party to apply to the board to have a bargaining unit's first contract decided at arbitration. Bill 90 contains no similar provision.

"In collective bargaining, situations do occur in which the parties are unable to compromise with each other—for any number of reasons—but not unwilling to have an

arbitrator make the final decisions on a collective agreement. Bill 90," OPSEU argues, "must include the arbitration option.

"Nowhere is the arbitration option more important than in first contract situations. First contract arbitration first appeared in Ontario with the passage of Bill 65 in May 1986"—when Mr. Peterson was here as the former Liberal Premier. "Introducing the legislation in November 1985, Liberal Labour Minister Bill Wrye made the following comments"—and I'll read them for the record because I think they're helpful:

"Employees who join a union do so with the expectation that collective action will produce monetary rewards and enhance the quality and security of their employment. Certification has no inherent value unless the procedures that follow the acquisition of bargaining rights ensure both parties a fair opportunity to conclude a first collective agreement.

"I am not suggesting a risk-free alternative to the present system. By its nature, bargaining is an adversarial process, and participants must be prepared for the sacrifices that may be necessary to advance their interests at the bargaining table. In the normal course of events, however, certification should lead to a collective agreement.

"The failure of the bargaining process is not only a cause for disappointment within the workforce; it may actually contribute to a deterioration in labour-management relations. Emotions often run high during an organizing campaign as individuals on both sides declare their support for or opposition to change. If certification is followed by a collective agreement, the foundation is laid for a longer-term, stable relationship with a mechanism to address outstanding problems. Where, on the other hand, the momentum of an organizing campaign and the desired expression of the majority for a collective agreement are frustrated at the bargaining table, there is a natural tendency for the employer to regard the union's defeat as vindication of its own position, and there is a risk that legitimate concerns of the workforce may be ignored.

"For these compelling reasons, the government believes that first-contract arbitration is essential."

"Twenty years after Bill 65, first contract arbitration is now one of the basic collective bargaining tools unions rely on to facilitate the advent of collective bargaining in the face of employer hostility to it. In keeping with the Liberal Party's historic concern for the legitimate concerns of working people and its desire for balance in collective bargaining law, Bill 90 should include the OLRA language on first-contract arbitration."

The government didn't listen to that. I didn't believe the government had any interest in listening to that, and they didn't. The colleges who came in front of our committee were very clear: Any one of these changes that OPSEU was recommending would make colleges hostile to the government. They would make them hostile because they would imply clearly, from the way I read these things, that there would be more costs, and as such, the government simply could not make these changes.

We made the arguments in committee; OPSEU and others, college workers and support staff, made these arguments—to no avail. The government members didn't listen, and I have to tell you, I didn't believe that they would.

There is another issue that the OPSEU members presented, and that was the issue of jeopardy.

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"The original CCBA,"—the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act—"contains a provision known as the 'jeopardy' provision, which requires the College Relations Commission to determine the point at which the students' year is irreversibly jeopardized by a strike or lockout. Under the current CCBA, the commission has an obligation to notify the minister so that he or she can take action to prevent the loss of students' academic year.

"You might ask, 'What is so special about colleges that this kind of protection is necessary?'" OPSEU says, "The answer is simple. Our mandate is to make our students job-ready. For most of our programs, this involves a considerable amount of hands-on learning. We have simulation labs and workshops where the students learn by doing under supervision. We put students in a mentoring environment in hospitals, social agencies or private industry. We guide our students to work in the real world with real clients."

They also say that "the jeopardy provision protects the government from being seen as interfering with collective bargaining because an independent party gives an independent assessment. It encourages teachers to re-focus on recovering our students' academic year." This is the argument that OPSEU made and that was disregarded by the Liberals in committee and by the minister and this government.

There is also an important feature that members who came to committee spoke to, and that was the deemed strike or lockout provision. They said, "The current CCBA contains provisions that require that when a bargaining unit is on strike or locked out, the entire bargaining unit is on strike or locked out.

"The union cannot strike at just one college, and the employer cannot lock out workers at just one college. Further, the colleges cannot pay workers to work during a strike or lockout, with the result that there are no scabs.

"Bill 90 removes these 'deemed strike or lockout' provisions. By doing so, it opens the door to rotating strikes or lockouts, which are antithetical to the principle of province-wide bargaining and province-wide collective agreements. Also, the complexity of bringing all students up to speed following a 'scattergun' work stoppage should not be underestimated," they warn.

"System-wide strikes or lockouts create system-wide pressures to resolve differences. These pressures reduce both the likelihood and the duration of work stoppages.

"There is another and perhaps most important problem with eliminating the deemed strike or lockout provisions. This involves the safety of workers and students.

"Under the current legislation, the union uses picket lines as a way to communicate with co-workers, students,

the employer and the general public. Under Bill 90, however, picket lines would take on a new role: to prevent the entry of scabs into the workplace. This would change the character of the picket lines entirely, and entirely for the worse.

"Right now, thousands of students work for colleges, mostly in support staff jobs, through various student assistance programs. When these workers are unionized, it is inevitable that some of those attempting to work during a strike or lockout will be students.

"Picket captains will not be able to differentiate between students who are going to class and students who are going to work. Conflict—up to and including accidental or intentional violence—is inevitable in such circumstances. We oppose the use of scab labour in all work stoppages, but the banning of scabs is doubly important on any picket line where young people may be crossing."

It is sad to have seen the Liberals remove the deemed strike or lockout provisions—something not even Tories under Mike Harris did. It is interesting that Mike Harris left that provision in place and Liberals removed that very provision which, in our view, is good for teachers and good for students. It was even good for Tories—unbelievable. It is hard to understand it sometimes, but these are the marvels of this place and the marvels of how our Liberals operate in this chamber. I've got to tell you, we made all these amendments and more. We had over 15 or 16 amendments that we introduced, and not one was supported, except one in a very small part. Only three amendments were introduced by the Liberals, and in my view all three were very minor. They didn't listen to anyone except the college teachers, who and with whom they had a deal, with whom they agreed that changes could not be made, and that any additional changes would find disfavour with the colleges. So they listened to the colleges, and I have to say I understand why the colleges did what they did. They are afraid, I understand that, and they are afraid because they're not getting the adequate funding they need. The issue of adequate funding is critical. We are supportive of this initiative that gives collective bargaining rights to college teachers and part-time staff. This is an initiative that will support these workers, and we are happy with that. The government could have done more, and they could have taken away fewer rights in providing these collective bargaining rights to the teachers and support staff.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments.

Mr. Reza Moridi: I want to thank the member for Trinity-Spadina for his remarks and comments. He touched on a few points. One was about funding to the college and university system in Ontario. I would just like to remind the honourable member that during the period when he and his party were in government, they cut student aid by 40%. They promised to eliminate tuition. Instead, they increased it by 50%. They eliminated operating grants and we reinstated them. They also cut funding to our medical schools. Today we all know

we are facing a shortage of doctors. That is as a result of cutting our medical school students during the NDP government in the early 1990s.

In relation to funding of universities and colleges, particularly colleges under this government, I'd just like to remind the member that our government has increased by almost 54% the operating grants to colleges, and per capita funding to students in our college system has been increased by almost 45% since we came to office in 2003. These are significant increases in terms of funding to our college system. In relation to the quality of universities and colleges, which the honourable member mentioned, I would like to bring to the attention of this House that our universities and colleges are some of the best in the world. The amount and quality of research, innovation, creation of science and creation of knowledge which has been done in our universities is among number one in the world. Take University of Toronto's researchers, take the University of Waterloo, take York University, Ryerson, Queen's, Ottawa; take our college system—Sheridan College, our Centennial College, George Brown College, Seneca College—all of them are doing tremendously well, and we thank them for—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: It is my pleasure to add some comments to the speech from the member for Trinity-Spadina on Bill 90. He mentioned in his talk that he feels the colleges are underfunded. He pointed out that the funding is not keeping pace with enrolment at colleges. I would agree with him on that point. Certainly in past years I've met with the president of Georgian College, Brian Tamblyn. There is a brand new Georgian College campus that just opened recently in the town of Bracebridge in Muskoka and it's doing a great job there. In my meeting with the president of Georgian College, he pointed out how it is getting more and more difficult for them to make their budgets balance and to deliver the programs they are delivering so well. As you drive by Georgian College, I think the sign on the highway says that something like 98% of the graduates get jobs. Certainly we have a great skills shortage in the province of Ontario. Just reading my local paper, there is a headline: "Wanted: Skilled Workers." That's the finding of the Labour Market Group's annual study, "Trends, Opportunities, Priorities."

We had in the Legislature last Thursday a private member's resolution on the floor that would have increased opportunity for our youth in this province: We could have changed the rules to do with the apprenticeship ratio. This province has a 3-to-1 ratio for trades like electricians and plumbers, so you need three journeymen for one apprentice, which is very different from most of this country, where most provinces have a 1-to-1 ratio, thereby providing much greater opportunity for our youth to have places to apprentice with businesses. So that's an easy change that this government could make but is unwilling to do.

I can see I'm out of time. Thank you.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I'm pleased to have a couple of minutes just to respond to the speech and make some comments in respect to our college system. I just want to reiterate: In our second year of our first mandate the Reaching Higher plan was the centrepiece of the budget, in which we committed to millions of dollars in investments in our post-secondary school system, particularly our college system. We've been doing that year in and year out since then.

Part of our commitment to the part-time and casual staff of the colleges was an opportunity for collective bargaining, an opportunity to have the kind of stability in the workplace that we've had such great success with in both the elementary and secondary school panels, providing that level of stability in the workforce so they can do the job they need to do in a way that best benefits their students.

I have the pleasure of having primarily students from my riding attend one of two colleges in my proximity of area, whether it's Durham College to the east, either in Oshawa or Whitby, or Centennial College just to the west of me in the Scarborough part of my riding. They have those choices. But the interesting part about our college system to me over the years is the way it's evolved. Virtually every college has multiple campuses. They have campuses in communities, in neighbourhoods with which the community can identify, and where students have an opportunity to come together, particularly in areas of speciality, and learn from their peers and experience the college life either in their neighbourhoods or with others who want to share the same type of experience.

The colleges have been a great success because of that, not because they've grown these massive single campuses, but often because they've grown these smaller, community-based campuses. The opportunity to collectively bargain in the context of that staffing envelope is an important part we wanted to achieve and it builds upon the Reaching Higher plan that we committed to early in our first mandate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to respond to my colleague from Trinity-Spadina. As always, he's provided us with a very spirited presentation here today, which we often appreciate. As the education critic for the New Democratic Party, I'm sure that he has encountered many times, as I did, in fact, during my first election, the fact that our colleagues opposite suggest that there has always been peace in the classroom since they took office. However, in March 2006, when I was elected to this Legislature, Algonquin College in my community of Nepean was actually on strike.

I know that this bill is important and we are generally supportive of this bill in the official opposition, but it's clear that we don't think that there is a question that part-

time instructors have become an important part of the college system, but this bill will undoubtedly come with additional costs. Part-time workers wouldn't want to form collective bargaining units unless they wanted to increase their compensation from the college system. So I would encourage the minister and his parliamentary assistant to ensure that they're speaking with the colleges with this piece of legislation.

At committee, many members of the Legislature spoke with the colleges, and it wasn't clear to them that their issues were being addressed. I think this piece of legislation needs further scrutiny. I think that we need to understand what exactly the cost will be to the system before we proceed. That's why I look forward to seeing this bill, once again, go to committee as we move forward so we can entirely scrutinize this piece of legislation.

Again, I would suggest that the government's record on this has been dismal.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Trinity-Spadina for a response.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you, everyone, for commenting. I'm particularly interested in the parliamentary assistant, who is, again, proud of his record, and says, "We have increased our per capita funding by 45%." Forty-five per cent of what? Where are you? Where were you? What does 45% mean? You're number 10 in per capita funding in Canada. You're last. New Democrats in a recession were giving more money to our universities and colleges than you are today. Just think about this. We were giving more money per capita to colleges and universities in a recession from 1990 to 1995 than you are today. You are number 10. You're last in funding. You have nothing to be proud of. So in taking refuge in the past by somehow attacking us to make yourself look good, you have nothing to look good with, because we gave more money than you did. We were above the median average in our time, in a recession, and you, with a good economy for the last six years that you've been in government, have given less than everybody. You are last. Please, it's nothing to be proud of.

Colleges are suffering and universities are suffering. This bill is a step in the right direction, but the elements you have removed from this bill, like the provision of jeopardy, were a mistake. Not providing the binding arbitration option is a mistake, we argue; eliminating the dean strike or lockout position that not even Tories dared to remove is a mistake; and creating four bargaining units instead of two is a mistake. So while you've made one step forward, you have taken so many steps back. I plead with you, fund the college system adequately. Merci.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I hardly know how to follow that. Anyway, I rise in the House today to support Bill 90. I know the members who have had the opportunity to speak to this bill have had a chance to talk about all the wonderful colleges that they have in their ridings.

Unfortunately, I don't have any colleges in my riding, and I did want to draw everyone's attention to that.

What I do have are colleges that are providing services within the riding of Huron-Bruce, and they're doing that for skilled trades. We think about how many skilled tradespeople are going to be required in order to move forward, and I'll talk specifically, as the member from Huron-Bruce, about the energy sector. I think of the services that are available today, and this is to deal specifically with trades that have not had the numbers that are needed in order to continue moving manufacturing forward, as well as the energy sector. Specifically, we have a millwright program where we work in partnership with Bruce Power, and we have on-site training.

Talking to the students who are successful—last year was the first year that we had students who graduated—how much they appreciated the opportunity to not go so far away from home. As you know, because of the fact that we don't have colleges and universities in my riding, we have to travel great distances in order to receive post-secondary education. The McGuinty government came forward not only with training centres within the riding of Huron-Bruce to meet our economic challenges and opportunities—to deal with all of our opportunities—but one of the things that I can tell you from my young people is the long-distance grants will help our children receive an education.

I hear the member from Trinity-Spadina's concerns about it, the colleges and universities as well, but from a rural perspective, I really want to lend my voice to that. When you think about our children—they're not children, they're young adults; at 17 they graduate—they travel very long distances in order to receive the education that they're going to require to get ahead in today's world. So having the ability to draw on a grant is an absolutely tremendous opportunity for them. When we think about the hundreds of people that the energy sector will be hiring, be it a wind turbine technician or a millwright, to deal with energy or manufacturing—we simply had to travel such distances, and then, with apprenticeship programs, it became such a hurdle for young adults to achieve.

So having programs in our riding has made a tremendous difference. There are a number of colleges that have been part of that: Georgian provides programs in the riding of Huron-Bruce; Fanshawe, Conestoga, Lambton.

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We also have a number of universities that provide courses for the people of Huron-Bruce, and I can tell you that it's very much appreciated. There are women who want to be able to go back to school, but because they have many obligations at home—they don't have the opportunities, the time, to overcome that. They're going back to school. We have PSW courses.

These are the changes that the McGuinty government has brought forward, giving people from my riding of Huron-Bruce, rural people, the opportunity to go forward with their education and being very respectful of the distances they have to travel.

We're talking about Bill 90 today. This has not changed in 30 years, but our rural communities haven't had opportunities in post-secondary for 100 years.

The members of the opposition rise and make their points, but where were they? Where were you? Where were you when it hasn't changed in my area? The only changes happened when we took over government. There were not the post-secondary opportunities.

I hear some members of the opposition groaning, but where were they? They can stand up and then they can tell me where people could have gone.

There are so many people in the province of Ontario, from north to south, from east to west, who all have different perspectives, different opportunities, different challenges, and I see that there has been a recognition of that, and Bill 90 coming forward with it.

It's been 30 years. They were in government. We've heard about Bill Davis, what he brought forward on the colleges, and, yes, we have acknowledged that. That was acknowledged.

And then we hear members from the third party: "Well, we..." "You should..." "You should..." Well, they were there, and they should have, and in fact they did—they did recognize it, but unfortunately they never saw it to its conclusion, because it did not receive royal assent. It got through first reading and second reading, and that was that. Unfortunately, they just weren't able to follow through and complete that task.

But the McGuinty government recognizes that this is an important part for the colleges in order that all of the employees within the colleges have opportunities. That's why I will be supporting Bill 90.

I also had the opportunity, as did a number of other members, to listen to the hearings. We heard from the student body as well. A young lady and a young gentleman spoke on behalf of the students. They did speak about Bill 90, which they were supportive of. We recognize that this is something that, quite frankly, needs to happen.

Certainly from my perspective, when all parties agreed and it moved on quickly, obviously there was a recognition from all parties that this is an important piece of legislation that has come, that the time is now and that we need to move forward.

I do want to talk about the economy. As all of you know, I'm sure, if you've been looking at your Black-Berries, with the \$700-billion bailout for the US being defeated and a drop of 1,000 points in a few scant hours, we know that the economy is facing extreme challenges today. We know that what we will require of our workforce, going forward, is going to change significantly. Anything that we can do as a government—and clearly, the McGuinty government sees that our skilled trades are part of the economic turnaround. We know that it will require a different skill set, and that's why pieces of legislation like Bill 90 are so important.

We have had the member from—and I'm going to get it right—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Richmond Hill.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Richmond Hill. The member from Richmond Hill did an excellent job of going through point by point, so I'm not going to do that. But I did want to put special emphasis on the fact that this will establish a certification process and it will allow part-time employees to unionize and to bargain collectively. That will be for the two units: one for part-time and sessional academic staff, and the other unit will be for part-time support staff.

I know that there were concerns raised during the hearings when they spoke about the ability to have two units in total, not four units. Part of the discussion was the maturity of the process and giving the ability to move in that direction, if it so desired. We also heard concerns raised about establishing a new employer bargaining council representing all colleges; so we also heard about a condensed number for that. Within the process, it also will allow them, through negotiations, to condense if that's the direction they so desire. Quite frankly, one of the constants that we heard was the maturity of the process.

I do want to congratulate the member for Trinity-Spadina for being consistent.

This is a building block; it's a platform that they can move forward on. It's legislation that needs to be passed quickly so that they can get on with the process. They have a mature relationship, and the sides can come together and move the units or move the employer bargaining council as they see fit. Quite frankly, that's what I felt the Whitaker report did: It recognized the maturity of the two sides and gave them the ability in the future to move the units to what they wish the units to look like.

With those words, I'd like to close. I do want to thank the four or five colleges that do provide the knowledge to all of the young people who travel for so many miles to come into the big cities all throughout Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The member for Huron-Bruce raised some interesting points, but the fact of the matter is that Ontario stands last in the nurses that we have per capita, Ontario stands last in Canada with the police officers that we have per capita, and Ontario stands last in the funding for community colleges in Canada. As disgusting as the first two are, the last one is the one that really concerns me. If you look at the world economy, if you look at the countries in the world that are doing well, those that are doing well have the best-educated population, and Ontario is amongst those populations today. If we continue to underfund colleges, that will not be the case for the future. Ontario has one of the most highly educated populations on the face of the earth today.

Interesting reading is *The World Is Flat*. It talks about this phenomenon and how countries that have free university education or free engineering and science degrees offered do extremely well in building their economy in a relatively short period of time after they implement these kinds of progressive programs.

When we look at the events of today, with the American Congress turning down the bailout, the markets dropping 600 or 800 points, it's a different world that we're moving into. This is very much of a sea-leap situation that we're in, and it's a different world that we'll face in 2009 by the time this thing settles down.

It's a well-educated entrepreneurial population that will create the environment which Ontario will live in in the future, so I would encourage this government and governments in the future to fund community colleges to the very best of their ability.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

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Mr. Rosario Marchese: I have no disagreement with the member from Huron-Bruce. She speaks proudly of the college system, as indeed even the Tories do and we all do. We think we have a good college system; there's no disagreement. The fact that you are giving collective bargaining rights to part-time college teachers, including support staff, is a good thing. We're not in disagreement with that.

Of course, you stalled and would have stalled forever if you could have, and eventually you couldn't. I understand that. But you have to admit that you guys were stalling for a long time. Even with Whitaker saying, "You've got to do it immediately," it still took you forever to introduce a bill. I understand that. But please, on the issue of funding, your government is last.

When we were en pouvoir in 1990, we were still giving more money on a per capita basis than you are today. Please look it up. Don't trust me. Member from Richmond Hill, do me a favour: Don't trust me. You shouldn't. Just look it up. Call legislative research—they work for us—and just ask them how much the NDP was giving from 1990 to 1995 and what you're giving today. You might be surprised. Don't trust me, but I am telling you that you are giving less today than we were in a recessionary period from 1990 to 1995. When you look that up, you're going to blush and say, "Gee, I didn't know that. It's embarrassing." It is embarrassing, because we have had 13 long, good, healthy economic years and we didn't invest. We're number 10—last. Please don't be proud of that. It doesn't make you look good.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to comment on the member from Huron-Bruce's issues related to Bill 90. I'm glad that we're finally moving forward on Bill 90. Five years, second mandate—I guess with Liberals governing Ontario things take a little while to move forward, even when they're as important as the member from Huron-Bruce espouses that they are.

I am also pleased that they agreed to have committee hearings on Bill 90. It's always valuable for all members of the House to have the input of experts in the field, and I don't think there is anyone who would disagree with the statement that the experts in the fields related to Bill 90 happened to be the colleges and the boards of governors

who operate the colleges. It's unfortunate that they haven't taken the information they received in the public hearings and actually transferred it into substantive amendments to Bill 90. But I suppose that's how we operate in a majority situation.

We allow the boards of governors and the colleges to choose the courses they offer to their students and to highlight the areas of expertise they want to promote in their various community college systems. Yet, when we seek out their input, as we did with Bill 90, the government has chosen to ignore many of the recommendations brought forward by the colleges, which is an unfortunate way to say, "Come, we want to hear from you; we want your input," and then ignoring it at the end of the day. But as we say, perhaps that's what we're led to in a Liberal majority.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

The member for Huron-Bruce for a response.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I do want to thank the members from Halton, Trinity-Spadina and Dufferin-Caledon for their responses.

I do want to remind the members that we not only held public hearings on Bill 90; I would also remind them that Mr. Whitaker did extensive research into his report, and this is how it began. It was a comprehensive report. He did not do it in isolation of speaking to those who were affected. He went and met with them. So the report came forward, and we believe Mr. Whitaker has covered off the needs in order to ensure that the college system remains strong while being respectful of the labour force that keeps the colleges strong. This is a balance about ensuring that both needs are met. But overall, and we must always be respectful of this, it is our children who are receiving the education they will need for the future. It is not only for their future, it is also for the province of Ontario, and we must always ensure that both of those are in balance as well. I feel that Bill 90 strikes that balance, and that is why I have stood to support Bill 90. We will debate this further in the House. I look forward to that. We are listening: We are listening through the hearings and we have also listened through the report and the recommendation included within that report.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I appreciate the opportunity to add my comments with respect to Bill 90, An Act to enact the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act, 2008. As many of my colleagues have already indicated, we in the Progressive Conservative caucus are generally supportive of this bill, but there are a few comments I would like to add before I get to some of the substantive issues that I think are salient.

First of all I would like to reiterate that the entire community college system, and this has been pointed out and acknowledged by the members opposite, was the realization of the vision of Premier William Davis and the Progressive Conservative Party a number of years ago. It has grown and developed amazingly well over the

years and has adapted its programs to change with changing needs in our community, with changing technology and with life, generally, in the 21st century. We're very proud of that leadership that developed under Premier Davis that has created a system of 24 colleges in the province of Ontario, all of which offer some remarkable programs, and there is a very diverse range of programs offered at the number of community colleges that we have.

Secondly, as I prepared for debate on this bill this afternoon I did notice, and I think some of the other members have commented on it, that members have used the opportunity in part to highlight some of the achievements of the community colleges that are located in their riding. I'm certainly extremely fortunate and very proud of Durham College, which is located primarily in my riding of Whitby—Oshawa. The main campus is in the north part of Oshawa and is co-located with UOIT, and the skills training centre is located in Whitby. In addition to that, there is a campus in Uxbridge, Ontario, continuing education courses are offered at St. Mary Catholic Secondary School in Pickering, and employment resource centres are located in Beaverton, Port Hope and Port Perry. So there is a very far-reaching effect. The tentacles, I guess, of Durham College do spread wide into the community and they offer some excellent programs.

This college was established in 1967 and has grown over the years from that initial location in north Oshawa. The presidents of the colleges over the years all have been visionaries, culminating most recently with the retirement of Dr. Gary Polonsky, who was the third president of Durham College, who became the third president in 1988. It was not only the work that he did with Durham College that was inspired, but it was under his leadership that UOIT—the University of Ontario Institute of Technology—became a university and was mandated and authorized by the previous Progressive Conservative government under Premier Mike Harris. This is a tremendous partnership that has grown and, again, came through the Progressive Conservative government, that brought about this new university. It is a fantastic location because it is co-located with Durham College, on the same footprint, and it allows for tremendous innovative partnerships to develop because they offer programs that complement each other. We've heard not just from students about how this works so well and so seamlessly, the fact that the college and the university work together to bring about these programs, but we've also heard from business leaders in our community who say that this works so well, it should be considered by other community colleges and universities in the future.

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This partnership has, of course, resulted in 6,100 full-time students at Durham College, and we are now proud to say we have over 4,000 university students at the university, which is pretty amazing for a university which has only been in operation for the last five years.

With respect to the bill itself, this of course would change the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act to allow

part-time and sessional workers at Ontario's 24 colleges to bargain collectively for the first time. Since the college's inception in 1967, part-time and sessional workers, of course, have not been involved in the bargaining agreement. I would say that this is quite a significant bill when you actually look at the numbers of people who will be involved with this. Currently, there are 17,600 part-time staff working in Ontario's colleges, so there's a large number of people who are going to be affected. About 8,900 of these people are part-time faculty and about 8,700 are part-time support staff. There are also 19,000 full-time staff, which includes over 9,200 full-time faculty. So we're talking about large numbers of people here, and Bill 90 does have the opportunity to affect the lives of many people.

In Durham College in my riding, I can report that there are 753 full-time staff, 177 part-time or contract faculty and 109 part-time or contract staff. Speaking specifically, again, of my riding, as you probably know, there have been many manufacturing job losses in the Durham region ridings and the area has been hit quite hard. I can only say thank goodness that we have Durham College and UOIT in the area because, to me, that is going to be the key to the turnaround in our local economy, and the programs and services that are being offered through the college and the university are going to be most helpful.

Certainly, it's not going to be easy and there's not going to be any quick fix for this, but I do believe that under the capable leadership of Mr. Don Lovisa, who is the acting president of the college, and Dr. Ron Bordessa, who is president of the university—they have some excellent full-time programs and retraining programs that are up and running that are going to be most helpful to those in our community who have been hit by the manufacturing job losses.

Of course, the funds that are available for those retraining programs are largely due to the \$355-million community heritage trust that was announced in the federal 2008 budget, which was repackaged by the provincial government as the second-career training strategy. As my colleague the member from Nepean—Carleton has indicated, the centerpiece of the 2008 provincial budget was actually the repackaging of federal money. I think it's important for the people of Ontario to know that, because certainly it's not talked about very much on the other side of the House. But, in fact, a large part of that retraining money is actually federal money.

Be that as it may, Durham College does have a number of excellent programs, and I would like to just indicate some of the programs that Durham College does offer. They offer more than 80 programs and courses through the schools of applied sciences, apprenticeship, skilled trades and technology, business, career development and continuing education, communication arts, design, emergency services, health and community services, information technology, integrated studies and justice. In addition, the school of career development and continuing education, a part-time study, offers 1,750

courses, 46 certificate programs, 12 diploma programs and two post-graduate programs in a wide variety of career and personal-interest subject areas. The college also provides training to businesses and individuals through business and industry development services.

But one of the jewels of Durham College is the one that is located in Whitby, which is the skills training centre. That is something that we in Durham region generally are quite proud of because it is offering great practical skills and services that actually can translate into well-paying jobs in our community. They offer an elevating devices mechanic apprenticeship program, which utilizes two state-of-the-art elevators and an escalator in the delivery of in-school training. It's the only college in Ontario to offer that. They also use—these are technical terms I'm not quite familiar with—boom and crawler cranes used in the delivery of simulated and practical crane training to apprentices as a part of hoisting engineer and mobile crane operator; again, the only college program of its kind in Ontario. Additionally, there are 17 apprenticeship programs, including 11 that are red seal, and numerous trade-related certificate and diploma programs, and all of the classrooms utilize state-of-the-art smart-board technology.

There again, you have the colleges leading the way in providing this jobs training and skills training that is going to help Durham region and the surrounding areas, not just Durham region, move into the 21st century and get the kinds of well-paying jobs that they deserve.

The hope is that, of course, we're going to be able to regroup quickly in Whitby-Oshawa and replace those jobs, but it's due to the efforts, I should say, of the previous member from my riding, the previous Progressive Conservative government, and of course the visionary leadership of Dr. Gary Polonsky, who inspired it all and was the one who created the university in the first place and the one responsible for bringing about the meshing of the college and the university.

Moving on to my next point, I think it's important to talk about the bottom line, being money or funding for the community colleges generally, and more specifically for the changes that are going to be brought about as a result of Bill 90. As with many bills being brought forward by this government, and we have seen this time and time again, they have lofty dreams, they have lots of things they want to talk about and great ideas, but no money to put those ideas into action. We've seen that with programs for people with special needs, with the human rights programs, and in many other bills that have been brought before this Legislature. There's a lot of talk but no money for the bottom line.

As has been pointed out by many of the members here, including most recently the member from Trinity-Spadina, the member from Nepean-Carleton and the member from Halton, currently Ontario has the lowest-funded college system in Canada—imagine that—and we're supposed to be the economic hub of Canada; we're 10 out of 10. We've heard a number of members speak quite eloquently on that point because, after all, if we are

going to move into the 21st century and we do want to compete on a world-class basis, we need to put the money into our colleges and universities. That in itself—but add that to the fact that there are going to be costs associated with the implementation of Bill 90. The part-time faculty and part-time staff who wish to be included in the bargaining units and to be able to have some clout obviously want to be able to use that to get a better financial arrangement for themselves. So there are going to be financial repercussions of some considerable significance as a result of this.

Again, we haven't heard anything about the money, so it's going to be incumbent on the government to make sure that they allocate sufficient funds in order to implement Bill 90. I'm not sure that's going to happen, but I guess we have to hope so.

The one other thing I would like to just mention a bit is with respect to some of the comments that were made by the member from Huron-Bruce when she was speaking about how much this Liberal government has done to bring opportunities forward for all Ontarians with the expansion, so called, of the community college system and giving so many opportunities to people who would otherwise not be able to attend the programs and get into the workforce. To that, I would say maybe they are creating some spaces, and I don't even know about that, but even to give them the benefit of the doubt if they are creating some spaces, what they certainly have not done is made it easier for, particularly, women with children to get back into the workforce. First of all, there are the many impediments that they face if they do have small children, in the first place, to be able to go to school on a full-time basis, to have the daycare spaces that they need to be able to go back to work. That's something that hasn't been addressed as part of this, and it's part and parcel of the whole education and retraining package. You can't speak of that in a vacuum, without giving particularly women those supports to be able to do that.

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The other part that happens, of course, is that even if women do get to the point where they are able to go back and retrain or attend college or university, and then they try to strike out on their own to make a better life for themselves and their children, the moment they do that, the moment they get a full-time job, they are often summarily either cut off of rent subsidies or they're found in a place where their rent triples or quadruples. So there's no incentive for them to do any better, because once they try to crawl out of the situation that they're in, they immediately get clawed back by this government. I think that's something that really needs to be addressed.

I've spoken to many women in my riding who have come to speak to me about it. They all have a very sincere desire to get back into the workplace. They want to create a better life for themselves and for their children. One woman actually had that happen, where she got to the point that her rent, as soon as she got a part-time job—and it was only a six-month contract job, I should point out as well—was immediately increased to triple

the amount she was previously paying. She told me that she was just getting to the point where she was looking forward to being able to get back on her feet, being able to feed her children fresh fruit and vegetables, and she found that she had to scramble once again for rent money.

I think that it's incumbent on this government to take a look not just at the educational opportunities, but to look at the supports that they need to put in place for families that do have special needs to be able to get them back into the workforce, and to look at lengthening some of these programs to give people a chance to really solidify their situation, to get back on their feet before the supports that they have in place while they are perhaps receiving some rent subsidies or some assistance from Ontario Works—that they're put into place to allow them to continue so they can thrive and support their families.

I did think that that was important to speak of just with respect to the issue of Bill 90 and the context in which it needs to be framed. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to that. As I said before, we are generally supportive of the bill in the Progressive Conservative caucus. We hope that the Liberal government will take these comments into consideration and will do the necessary in order to make sure that this bill has a chance in practice. So I thank you for that opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I congratulate the member from Whitby—Oshawa for her comments. She too, like all the other members, speaks highly of Durham College, and so she should. Everyone has had a good experience of our colleges. Nobody is attacking the college system that I'm aware of. We all defend colleges, for a good reason: Because they're the ones who train most of our students and get them ready to get into the working world. Why would you attack the colleges? So no beef with that.

The only problemo, as the member from Trinity—Spadina says, is that they're unfunded. That's what the member from Whitby—Oshawa speaks to. She has obviously learned from the experience of Mike Harris. It was a mistake; she acknowledges that. I think that's good, because only by acknowledging that can you move on. So now that we're able to acknowledge that Mike Harris did some things and did some things badly, we're able to move on, and we're able to say, "We need to fund our college system in a way that allows us to become more competitive in today's economic uncertainties." That's what they're asking us for. They came into the committee and they said, "We are close to running deficits. We support this bill, but if you don't give us money, we can't even comply with your bill because we'll be in a deficit situation." And you know what? If the Liberals were in opposition and Mike Harris was on the other side, they would all be saying what Marchese is saying: Colleges need more. Colleges hate to be last in Canada. Universities hate to be last. It's an embarrassment, nothing to be proud of. Of course Liberals would

say, "We need more funding," if they were over here, but when they're in government they say, "Oh, no. We're giving 40% more today than we did I don't know when. But we're still number 10." Forty percent of what? Please. How can you be proud of that?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I'm very pleased to join in the debate with respect to Bill 90, the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act, and to share a few moments with my colleagues in this House about my local college, Humber College, Lakeshore Campus.

Lakeshore Campus of Humber College, I think, highlights the excellent work being done in our college system across the province. First of all, it's a wonderful space. If you haven't had the opportunity to visit us in Etobicoke—Lakeshore and see the old historic psychiatric hospital, which has now been turned into very innovative and modern buildings on that campus—last year, I was very pleased to be able to announce significant investments our province was making with respect to being able to finish the construction of the last historic heritage building and to make sure that campus would continue to grow and prosper as it has, on the shores of Lake Ontario.

The issue with respect to college collective bargaining is one that was brought to me by many of the college teachers who taught in my community at Humber College, so I'm pleased that we've been able to respond to this issue and come forward with this act.

As has been said on the floor of this Legislature, colleges are an avenue for so many Ontario students to gain the experience, practical experience, and the knowledge that they need to be able to enter into careers which will allow them to be able to raise and look after their families, improve their circumstances of life and do something they really enjoy doing.

Humber College's Lakeshore campus has many incredible, innovative programs, from comedy school to acting to art to music. It is a real gem in our community, and it's one that I'm very proud to be able to visit very regularly.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a real pleasure to be able to address this piece of legislation for the third or fourth time today. I think my colleague from Whitby—Oshawa, as always, has provided us with a very detailed précis of what the legislation is about but also what its impacts will be. She has brought to the floor some very serious concerns with respect to funding of our local community colleges; the importance of these community colleges; and of course, the roots of the community colleges, which we know as of today, thanks to Bill Davis and his vision.

In Nepean, we're very fortunate to have one of the great community colleges of this province, Algonquin College, which I visit often. I work with the president there, as well as their director of government relations and public affairs. I'm always amazed by the work they

do in our community and by the students who attend there and also participate in the community.

We're very fortunate in Ottawa, in Nepean, to be receiving a new trades school, which will be affiliated with Algonquin College, which will be part of Algonquin College. I think it speaks to the need in this province for skilled labourers and skilled tradespeople, something we consistently hear about. In fact, less than a year ago I was at Algonquin College, where Statistics Canada did a presentation for us on the needs of this trades school and the need for more trades.

This brings me to a point about the hospital which my colleague Ted Chudleigh from Halton has been fighting for: a hospital in Oakville. He has been working so hard to get that hospital, and he's consistently told the hospital will not go forward because there are not enough skilled labourers. Yet when I spoke with the Ottawa Construction Association and its counterparts throughout Ontario, do you know what they told me? There are enough people who can build that hospital, and they're wondering why the Liberal government won't build the hospital for Ted Chudleigh—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. Further questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I, too, support the colleges in Ontario and, more particularly, two colleges that serve the people of my riding. The first one is Cambrian College. Cambrian College has very innovative programs to meet the needs of the local community, and certainly they have a very active selection of trade programs to meet the needs of the booming mining industry in northern Ontario. Not only do they offer core mining, to prepare people to go work in the mines, but also all of the trades that work in the mining industry and used-to-be forestry industry—but that industry does not need new workers because of some of the decisions made by this government that led to the collapse of the forestry industry in northern Ontario.

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Dans mon comté, on a également le Collège Boréal. Le Collège Boréal offre une formation en français à tous les étudiants du nord-est de l'Ontario. Ils ont également plusieurs dizaines de collèges satellites qui offrent des services en français à tous les étudiants de l'Ontario qui y sont intéressés. Eux aussi ont mis beaucoup d'emphasis à développer les métiers pour être sûrs que la main-d'œuvre de demain rencontre les besoins des industries. Certainement, au premier plan on regarde tous les métiers que l'on retrouve dans les mines, parce qu'en ce moment, le domaine minier est en pleine expansion à Sudbury. Avant, ils mettaient beaucoup d'emphasis sur les travailleurs forestiers. Malheureusement, les emplois dans la foresterie en ce moment n'existent quasiment plus parce que tous les moulins à papier, les moulins à pâte et les travailleurs du bois sont présentement en chômage.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): The member from Whitby—Oshawa for a response.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I've listened very carefully to the members from Trinity-Spadina, Etobicoke-Lake-

shore, Nepean—Carleton and Nickel Belt, and I thank them for their comments.

The member from Etobicoke—Lakeshore spoke glowingly of the programs offered at Humber College, and the member from Nickel Belt about Cambrian College and Collège Boréal. It sounds like they offer amazing programs, and I think we are rightfully proud of the community colleges that are located in our ridings. No one would take any quarrel with that.

But the fact of the matter is that Ontario is still 10th out of 10 in terms of monies allocated to fund community colleges across Canada. The colleges, of course, need to have money to develop the kinds of programs and services that we in Ontario need for our young people to be able to compete in a global economy. We need to have visionary leadership that is going to be able to look five or 10 years ahead to see the kinds of programs that we'll need, because with the world changing as quickly as it is, the marketing skills and the jobs that we're going to need in the next 10 or 20 years are going to change rapidly as well. Technology is also changing. So we need someone to have that kind of visionary leadership, and you have to be able to pay the people who are going to be working in the colleges properly.

I think that in Ontario, when we have a difficult economic situation and uncertain times at the moment, the best thing we can do—the best thing we always could do for our young people—is to put money into education. Speaking as a parent of three children who are about to embark on post-secondary education in the next year, I can certainly speak to the importance of that for our young people, to be able to have a chance as future leaders of our community and our country and our businesses. We need to put the money into that. That should be our top priority, and I hope that's something the government is going to be addressing as we work forward in this session in the months and weeks to come.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm glad to rise today to talk about Bill 90, An Act to enact the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act, 2008, to repeal the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act and to make related amendments to other Acts.

First, I'd like to commend and congratulate OPSECAAT, the Organization of Part-Time and Sessional Employees of the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology. Those people worked really hard to organize those workers and they certainly deserve our praise for the hard work that they have done.

It's hard to listen to everybody in the Legislative Assembly talk about how important college education is to the future of this province but at the same time realize the fact that we are number 10 in per capita funding for college education. We're not in the middle of the pack; we're not leading the pack. We are 10th. Then I hear the government taking praise for increases in budgets, but we are still 10th; we are still at the bottom of the pack. This is not the Ontario we want and this is not the Ontario we deserve.

We've all agreed: A college education is a cornerstone for our province to keep forging ahead, to be ready for what tomorrow will bring. Yet we are 10th in per capita funding. We've seen a little bit of increase, but that made no difference. We're still at the bottom of the pack. That's hard to comprehend.

My party, the NDP, has always sported collective bargaining rights, and my colleague from Trinity-Spadina presented two private member's bills to that effect. None of them was ever put into law. But with Bill 90, we will have an opportunity to change a few things.

I want to talk a little bit about OPSEU, the Ontario Public Service Employees Union. They represent 120,000 Ontarians working in a wide variety of occupations across the public sector. OPSEU membership may be grouped as follows: 35% of the Ontario public service are direct government employees—some of them work with us—50% work in the broader public service in health care, social services, property assessment, at the LCBO and in other important areas to the residents of Ontario, and 15% of their membership works in two full-time bargaining units—that is, academic and support—in the Ontario community college system. Bill 90 will have an effect on those OPSEU members working in full-time bargaining units in academics and support.

OPSEU's predecessor, the Civil Service Association of Ontario, first organized community college support staff in 1966, the same year the college system was created—we're talking 42 years ago. In 1972, the Ontario government passed the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act—which I think everybody here has been referring to as the CCBA—which supplanted the Public Service Act as the legislative framework for colleges' bargaining.

The CCBA sets out the structure of bargaining units at the colleges. There are currently two province-wide bargaining units: one for full-time and partial-load faculty members and one for full-time support staff. Both units cover all 24 colleges—that's French-language or English-language colleges.

OPSEU currently represents some 9,000 college faculty—that includes professors, counsellors, librarians and instructors—and more than 7,000 support staff. Under the current CCBA, Colleges Collective Bargaining Act, certain workers are excluded from the bargaining units and hence from collective bargaining. I'll give you a list of the workers who are excluded. We talk about part-time faculty—those are people teaching six hours or fewer per week—working as counsellors and librarians; sessional faculty teaching more than 12 hours per week on a temporary contract for no more than 12 months in any 24-month period; part-time support staff working 24 hours or fewer per week; part-time support staff working on non-recurring projects; and students employed on a co-operative educational training program. That means a lot of people have no rights to bargain, no rights to be represented—basically very few rights.

Ontario is the only province where part-time college employees have been excluded from collective bargaining. Within Ontario, no comparable workers—for ex-

ample, those working at universities or school boards—are excluded from collective bargaining either. But for some weird reason, we did that to the college workers. So in February 2008, this year, the chair of the Ontario Labour Relations Board told the minister responsible for colleges, "There is no justification for excluding these employees from collective bargaining. Part-time employees should be immediately granted the right to unionize."

Why they had to go through that much trouble to have their right recognized is beyond me. It sure was a long road that cost a lot of effort, money and energy. Here again I want to mention the great work that OPSECAAT has done to bring the part-time college worker to this point.

1700

Members of OPSEU have been calling for recognition of collective bargaining rights for college part-timers for 25 years. It took 25 years to recognize that what works for the school board and what works for the university should work for college workers as well, but it took 25 years for that reality to come to fruition.

The introduction of Bill 90 is the result of two main drivers. In April 2005, the annual convention of OPSEU launched a public relations and political lobby campaign aimed at winning collective bargaining rights for part-timers and sessional workers. This campaign resulted in, among other things, the creation of the Organization of Part-Time and Sessional Employees of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology. This organization, known as OPSECAAT, gives a voice to part-time and sessional workers and the means to make that voice heard, because for all of those 42 years, those people did not have a voice, did not have rights and did not have a chance to be represented.

Members of OPSECAAT played a lead role in the 2007-08 organizing drive which saw thousands of part-time and sessional workers sign OPSEU union cards. I remember this campaign. I remember them coming to Collège Boréal and Cambrian College, and the support from those people was just tremendous. In some colleges they would achieve 95% signatures—in the possible memberships.

"In June 2007, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled for the first time that collective bargaining is a protected right under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in a majority decision related to British Columbia health care workers. Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin and Justice Louis LeBel wrote: 'We conclude that section 2(d) of the charter protects the capacity of members of labour unions to engage, in association, in collective bargaining on fundamental workplace issues.'

"These two drivers resulted in the major announcement on August 30 last year. In a news release entitled 'McGuinty Government Announces Intention to Recognize Bargaining Rights for Part-Time College Workers,' then-college Minister Chris Bentley announced that Kevin Whitaker, Chair of the Ontario Labour Relations Board, had been appointed to conduct a review of the

Colleges Collective Bargaining Act and propose amendments. Whitaker presented his report to new minister John Milloy on Feb. 1, 2008. Whitaker's recommendations are the foundation stones of Bill 90, introduced for first reading in the Legislature on June 10, 2008."

My colleague from Trinity-Spadina talked to you about what went on in committee and what went on through clause-by-clause. Our party had made 16 recommendations to improve Bill 90 and zero, not one of them, was retained by the government. This bill could have done way better than the way it is presently written, but the government was not willing to listen.

One of the first pieces that really puzzle the mind is, why is it that, when we already have a unit for professional staff and we already have a unit for support staff, we are creating two new ones? Why aren't part-time workers included with the professional unit and the part-time support staff included with full-time, like we see in every hospital I've worked at, like we see in lots of universities and like we see in most of the school boards? For reasons that are unclear, there will be four units right now. There will be one for full-time professionals, one for part-time, one for full-time support and one for part-time support. The judge mandated, gave them the right to unionize, but it seems like the government is going into this kicking and screaming a bit.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: A little bit.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Just a little bit. They know that they have to give them unionization because they won this with their hard work, perseverance and a lot of resources. But then, rather than giving them the chance to organize in a way that would make sense—they've kind of agreed to it because they have no choice, but they will set them up to divide and conquer, I like to call it; not a good scenario.

We certainly had put out a recommendation to permit either the council or the bargaining agent or trade union that is applying for certification as the bargaining agent for a group of college employees to apply to the OLRB to change, establish or eliminate bargaining units so that if everybody agrees, if the part-time and the full-time professionals want to be together in one unit—well, Bill 90 won't allow them to do this. If the support staff, the part-time support staff and the full-time support staff, want to be together in one bargaining unit, well, Bill 90 won't allow them to do this. I have yet to hear a convincing argument as to why this has to be that way.

Another change that we would have liked to see, as soon as I find my notes, is that we set six time frames as to when the collective agreement starts and when it ends—very much like in public schools, where the collective agreement starts on September 1 and ends on August 31 of their final year. This way, it is a fixed time. It exists in the educational system in Ontario already and has served the people of Ontario well. But here again, Bill 90—we are asking to retain the provision contained in section 45 of the current CCBA that stipulates that collective agreements must begin on September 1 and expire on August 31. The existing bargaining units—the

professional full-time, the support full-time—already have that. But with Bill 90, we will take that away from them while taking it away from the new bargaining units as well.

Why do we have to take that away? Here again, I haven't heard anybody bring forward a convincing argument that this is a wise move that will serve the people of Ontario well. It just appeared. We are taking rights away from existing units, and taking them away from units that are being created, for no apparent reason. I can't see how the people of Ontario will be better served by taking that away through Bill 90.

Another one that is very important is the deemed strike or lockout provision. Presently, the college workers, the professional and support workers, the full-timers, have this recommendation, that the deemed strike or lockout provisions are included in subsection 59(2) and subsection 63(3) of the current CCBA. If Bill 90 becomes law, this deemed strike provision will be taken away.

What does that mean? It means that when a unit goes on strike, every member of that unit is on strike. That's what "deemed strike" means. Once you take that away, then a unit may be on strike but some people may decide to cross. A college may be on strike but another one in another part of Ontario won't be.

1710

The idea of forming one unit for all the college workers of Ontario is precisely so that they bargain as a provincial body. The deemed strike could be a very important issue in my riding, either at Collège Boréal or Cambrian. But then maybe Ottawa would cross—I can tell you that I was management when OPSEU was on strike, and we had some workers cross the line. It is so difficult for those workers to ever regain the trust to work together again afterward. It surely is not worth it.

I don't know why Bill 90 is taking away that clause. This is a clause that is already there, that is already in effect for the full-time professionals and full-time support workers, but Bill 90 will take that right away. Here again, why take this away? I would like to hear an argument that would convince me that it is for the good of Ontarians to take it away.

If this happens, it will make it really hard when students go back to school after a strike or a lockout. It will bring a lot of hardship for no reason I can see, and yet this new legislation would do this. It would open the door to rotating strikes and lockouts, which flies in the face of the principle of province-wide bargaining and province-wide collective agreements.

When you have a deemed strike or lockout system-wide, there is pressure on the system to resolve the difference. No offence to anybody, but when you live in northern Ontario, it is really hard to have your voice heard in Toronto and at Queen's Park. So if there is an issue that is important enough for the people of the north to go on strike, they want the support of the people in southern Ontario. The same thing is true in reverse: If there is an issue that is important enough to the members

in southern Ontario, I can guarantee you that northern Ontario would support them. But we need that deemed strike or lockout provision to stay in, and the way Bill 90 reads right now, it would take away the rights of those workers.

I see that my time is almost up. As I said before, the New Democrats have always supported the right of collective bargaining, and we will continue to do this. There are opportunities to change Bill 90 to make it better so that it serves the people who will be unionized but also serves the students and ultimately the people of Ontario.

I hope the government will listen and make those changes. Thank you. Merci.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Reza Moridi: I want to thank the members from all parties who spoke highly about our college system and the good work our colleges are doing.

I want to echo the statement made by the member for Whitby—Oshawa about Durham College. I was visiting the University of Ontario Institute of Technology recently and witnessed first-hand the good work they have been doing in training and educating students, particularly in the areas of engineering and energy engineering.

This is a university that basically came out of Durham College. Durham College itself has been doing a great job. I must tell the House that my son-in-law is a graduate of Durham College. Both my daughter and my son-in-law went to colleges after finishing their university education. One went to George Brown College and the other went to Durham College, to get further education, to get more skills and find better jobs. That's what our colleges are doing in this province.

I want to comment quickly about the comment made by the member from Trinity—Spadina about the delay in bringing this bill forward. I must remind the honourable member that when the NDP was in government, they brought a similar bill to the House but never took it to third reading.

Interjections.

Mr. Reza Moridi: They should have done that at the time. They didn't.

By the time the Premier made the policy decision, we recruited Mr. Whitaker to review the issue in the college system. Mr. Whitaker delivered his report on February 1, and by June 10 our bill was ready and submitted to the House, and now we are debating that bill. So we were quite proactive and we were quite fast and active in presenting the bill to the House—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I thank the member for Nickel Belt. Is Blezard Valley in Nickel Belt?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Nickel Belt. That's it.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: They'll be harvesting potatoes up there at this time of year. It's a great potato-growing area. They used to grow virus-free seed potatoes up there.

I don't think they do any more, but they produced some excellent potatoes in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s.

The interesting part about this bill is, of course, the effect that it may have on the part-time teachers. There are two possible effects that it can have. One, if the government were to fund any extra money that this bargaining process would create, then the effect would be, of course, quite positive on the community colleges, something that I think we all hope for. However, the events of not only today but the last couple of months may indicate that the funds that are flowing to government revenues, which the minister didn't talk about in his press release today when he talked about the second quarter results, may slow down a great deal. If the funds aren't there for the government to fund part-time teachers, the other alternative might happen, and that would be a cutback in the services from part-time teachers. Of course, if that were to happen, we would find community colleges cutting back their programs or focusing more directly on programs that were important to them; in any case, shaving back their programs somewhat, which would be, I think, a negative thing for Ontario. They would be left with no alternative, particularly if this government, being short of revenue, was scrambling to try to solve the financial difficulties that it's found itself in.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Before I ask for further questions and comments, can I ask the members to please keep it down to a slight dull roar? It's getting quite loud on the other side of the House. Thank you very much.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I congratulate my colleague from Nickel Belt. She raised a few different points in terms of the efforts that were made in committee to make the bill a little more effective. We were not successful. None of our amendments were supported. I had no doubt about that; I knew they wouldn't support any of our amendments, so it wasn't a surprise to me.

She reminds us about the underfunding of the college system that has led successive governments to hire more and more part-time staff because colleges could not afford full-time, because they weren't getting the money. They were hiring more and more part-time staff—academics and support staff—because it was cheaper.

Regrettably, we did not proclaim that bill that had been introduced under our term. It's regrettable; I acknowledge that. We were in a perfect position, as New Democrats, to have proclaimed that bill. We didn't do it. As a result, Mike Harris was able to give colleges the power to hire more and more college assistants. By not giving the money, it allowed colleges to do that, because they couldn't do otherwise, and it allowed the Liberals, for four long years, to do the same. By not funding them adequately, colleges had no choice but to hire more and more part-time academic and support staff. So I regret that we weren't able to do that, and I attack the Liberals for not being able to do that in the four years of their last term.

Yes, they've stalled, but finally we have it before us, and it's better than what we had, absolutely. But to eliminate some of the provisions, such as the deemed strike or lockout provisions, is regrettable and sad. Not even the Tories did that. It's regrettable that they didn't have binding arbitration that their own minister supported in 1985, and the same with a few other changes the member recommended.

I support all of the things that she said, and I look forward to her final two minutes.

1720

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on Bill 90. I'm very proud to be standing here today as to our government's commitment to colleges, and let's take the example of Algonquin College in the city of Ottawa. Most recently, just this past summer, Premier McGuinty announced a \$30-million investment for a skills trade building in Algonquin College—\$30 million, one of the largest capital project investments in any college—so that we can meet the needs of the skills shortages and ensure that we train skilled people at Algonquin College to make sure they can take part in the rejuvenation and growth of our economy here in Ontario. What is unfortunate is that the federal government has not given a single penny to that project. Repeated promises have been made by the local member, who happens to be John Baird, a former member of this Legislature, but not a single penny.

But this government is not stopping. This government would love to have that partnership to ensure what our colleges foster, but we will not just wait; we will continue investing in our colleges. We will continue to ensure, through legislation like Bill 90, that part-time teachers and support staff have the rights necessary to ensure that we have an effective college system. Algonquin College, in the city of Ottawa, is a great example, where investment is being made by the provincial government, by the McGuinty government, to ensure that we continue to provide skilled tradespeople in our economy so that Ontario can continue going further. I hope that the federal government will become a partner in that and deliver on the promise they made for Algonquin College.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): The member for Nickel Belt for a response.

M^{me} France G  linas: I would like to thank the members from Richmond Hill, Halton, Trinity-Spadina and Ottawa Centre. I can see that we kind of disagree as to what should be in Bill 90 and what shouldn't be.

Certainly another omission in the legislation, the way I see it, relates to the organizing drive. Bill 90 makes no mention of what happens to existing applications for certification made under the current CCBA. The repeal of the previous legislation may give rise to the argument that the certification proceeding that OPSEU commenced under the current act would be extinguished with the passage of the new legislation. These workers' intense

desire to become OPSEU members and take part in collective bargaining must not be frustrated by legislative technicalities and employer stalling tactics whose main purpose and effect is to delay certification for as long as possible. For this reason, Bill 90 must include a mechanism to provide OPSEU—I say OPSEU because they are the only union that has applied to be certified as the bargaining agent for college part-timers and sessional—with a one-time opportunity to trigger a certification vote for the two groups of workers, academic and support, who are currently excluded from the collective bargaining. With those suggestions, Bill 90 would be way stronger.

But at last we will have bargaining rights for our college workers, and this is something that this party will support. The academic and support staff, the part-timers and the sessional workers will have an opportunity to bargain through Bill 90. There would have been opportunity to make this bill way stronger. It's not going to happen, but I guess, as my colleague mentioned, we shouldn't expect more than that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate? The member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan.

Applause.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm happy to rise today to the thunderous applause from my colleagues here in the Legislature and speak for a short time on Bill 90, the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act. As has been mentioned earlier, this is the first time, as I understand it, since 1975 that this bill will be changed or altered in any substantive way.

As most people will know, in August 2007, our government under Premier McGuinty made a very clear and public commitment towards extending collective bargaining rights to part-time college workers, and subsequent to that announcement, Kevin Whitaker was enlisted—

Interjection: A promise made, a promise kept.

Mr. Bill Mauro: As my colleague says, "A promise made, a promise kept."

Mr. Whitaker went out and consulted, and so before us today we have Bill 90 for debate here in this Legislature.

If there is one thing that I think is important for anyone who happens to be watching on TV and who is paying attention to this debate, it would be that for the first time in the history of the province of Ontario, part-time teachers and sessional workers and part-time faculty in the college system will have extended to them the opportunity to collectively bargain. There's been a lot of discussion today, but I think it's important that we ensure that anybody who is listening and interested in this issue, if they are going to take one thing away today from all of the discussion and dialogue that has gone on over the course of today's third reading and back to second reading, it would be that one little bit.

Before I get into the main body of my comments, I do want to offer a few thoughts on some of the commentary that was put forward by the members of the third party. If I could even go back a little further in time before commenting on today's remarks, I would like to go back to

the spring session when I was sitting here, and the member from the third party was sitting over there. When he was speaking on second reading, he was pleading and beseeching the people watching on television not to leave their chairs, to ensure that they stayed and listened to him. He had 10 or 20 minutes that particular day to speak, and he implied that there was something of consequence that he was going to say to them that day, in June of this year, 2008, and I listened intently. I stayed in my chair, I tell the member from the third party, because I, like them, was enthralled with what the member was saying. I believed that you were going to send a message, that you were going to say something of consequence on Bill 90. That was in the spring session. Unfortunately, he used about 50% of his time on that particular day asking them to stay in their chairs, and then he spent the last 50% of his time talking about things other than the bill, I would suggest.

Today, again, the member of the third party had an hour leadoff, and the same kind of theme was there. It was consistent; he was implying that there was this wonderful bit of information that was coming forward, something of consequence that was going to come to us that he was going to tell us about Bill 90.

I can only imagine, as I sit and try and figure this out, the spring session and the fall session, that the member from the third party is perhaps attempting to fog the collective consciousness of the people who are watching this particular debate. What does he not want them to know? What is this misdirection? If you play football, you know about misdirection. What is it that the member of the third party is trying to get them not to remember? I'm more than happy to speak about the bill, and I will do that, and what we are doing for the first time in history of the province of Ontario.

But perhaps what the member of the third party did not want people who are watching and interested in this debate to know was that in 1992 the government of the day introduced Bill 23.

Mr. Jeff Leal: What was that bill?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I think that was a bill that had the same intention as the one that's before us today.

It's important to note that this is the party that likes to pretend and remind us of how they are there for working families, the labour-friendly party. I suppose part-time college workers are not working families. I'm not sure.

So in 1992 there was the introduction of Bill 23. In 1992 I guess they were busy, and 1992 went.

Mr. Jeff Leal: What about 1993?

Mr. Bill Mauro: Then 1993 came and Bill 23 was not called for third reading in 1993; it came and it went.

Mr. Jeff Leal: What about 1994?

Mr. Bill Mauro: Then 1994 came, and Bill 23 was not called for third reading. It came and it went.

Mr. Jeff Leal: What about 1995?

Mr. Bill Mauro: Then, as my colleague from Peterborough has reminded me, 1995 came, Bill 23 was not called, and 1995 went. So through that period of time, the labour-friendly, working-family party apparently did not

have the time or the ability to accommodate this legislation—three and a half years, and apparently no time to get it done. I can only imagine, when the member speaks to this bill, that that is the part he doesn't want people to know.

I want to offer one brief comment as well on the member's introduction of his two private member's—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Please take your time; you've got 20 minutes.

1730

Mr. Bill Mauro: I have lots of time; I've got a good 15 left.

The member opposite introduced a private member's bill on two occasions, I believe; the bill was the same both times. It would not even have given choice to the part-time faculty in the college system on whether or not they wanted to unionize. His private member's bill would have made it automatic. Not only that, he would not have provided them choice, through his private member's bill, on who their bargaining agent would be. That's what his private member's bill would have done. It seems to be a bit contradictory, when he had three and a half years as the member of an NDP government in the early 1990s in which he could have brought forward this legislation, and then he brings forward a private member's bill that won't even allow them to have the choice on (a) whether they want to unionize or not, or (b) if they so choose to unionize, on who their bargaining agent would be. It seems to me to be a little bit odd that he would put it forward that way, one could almost say even anti-democratic.

One of the other themes in the member's speech was that this particular sector had some fear about speaking to the McGuinty government about this particular issue. I can only imagine the people chuckling, the OPSEU members—they must have been laughing out loud, I would expect, to hear the member suggest that OPSEU was afraid of speaking to a Liberal member or the Liberal government on this particular issue. In fact, I think he even mentioned that the teachers themselves were afraid to speak to government members on this particular legislation. I can tell you, in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan, I met with both of those groups on at least one occasion, and the suggestion by the member of the third party that they were afraid to advocate on behalf of their core constituency is a bit of an odd theme, I would expect, for him to run with during the course of his comments today. I look forward to seeing the third reading vote on this particular legislation, and I'm curious to watch as to how that particular member, as well as the entire third party, are going to vote on this particular legislation.

I can tell you that I am one of the fortunate members in the Legislature in that I have a community college in my riding. Other members who have stood and spoken today on Bill 90 have spoken to the benefits of having a community college in their riding, and we have heard from others who do not have one in their riding and what they feel they are missing. We're fortunate in Thunder

Bay-Atikokan to have Confederation College and a wonderful president, Pat Lang, who does a tremendous job, a fantastic job of leading that college. Colleges, as we all know, are incredibly large pieces of the economic pie in our communities, but more than that, the college sector is flexible and adaptable to the labour needs of the communities in which they exist and the regions of the province in which they exist. I can tell you, in north-western Ontario, speaking for my own community college, that they have an incredibly high employment rate for the graduates that come out of the college system. They are a wonderful thing.

We have spent a fair bit of time—and I'll talk a bit more about that in a little while—talking about the operating side of the equation. I hear the members opposite talking about where we rank across the province. We haven't talked at all about the commitments that we have made on the infrastructure side. I can tell you that in my riding of Thunder Bay-Atikokan, at Confederation College, there is probably somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$20 million in infrastructure and additional programming in one college, which has gone a long way to renovating, retrofitting space, so that my particular college can accommodate a significantly increased number of people in the building trades program. We have ramped up a fantastic media program in Thunder Bay. They now have the best technology that exists in their field, the CAMP project, the Centre for Applied Media Production, as well as other significant infrastructure investments. It is another piece of this that has been going into the post-secondary system that has not received any discussion today. I would imagine that other members who are here today who are fortunate enough to have one of the 24 community colleges in their riding would have a similar story to tell on the infrastructure, on the capital side of the equation when it comes to the college program.

There's one wonderful program I'll highlight before I move on that we just developed in my riding of Thunder Bay-Atikokan under our government, something that you won't hear of through all of the criticism that is constant from the other side of the floor: a nursing program that was rolled out through Confederation College in Thunder Bay to communities through satellite campuses—Fort Frances, Kenora, Dryden, Sioux Lookout—small communities where the people who live in those communities would not have had an opportunity, many of them single mothers who wanted to be a nurse, who could not have left their home communities and travelled to Thunder Bay to take this course. The program has been running for three or four years and has been a huge success, and it's a great example of what community colleges can do in terms of establishing a workforce in small, remote communities in the province of Ontario.

I talked a bit here about the capital side. I think it bears repeating even though others have said this. On the operating side, from 2002-03 to 2007-08, operating funds have increased in the college sector by almost 54%. College per student funding in the province of Ontario

has gone up to \$6,645 per full-time equivalent in 2007-08, up from \$4,594 in 2002-03. That's a 44% increase. What it speaks to is, what a large gap existed in the college system in Ontario relative to the college systems in other provinces when we came to government, that we could make that much of a capital infusion, of an operating fund infusion, and still have that much more work to do, as has been explained by many other people. And yet, that kind of financial resource which has been committed to this particular sector is still dismissed as being insignificant.

I was surprised by the comments from the member for Whitby-Oshawa. It sounded like she was lobbying for more investment in the sector, although I'm never sure. We're talking about tax cuts, often, from that particular party; we're talking about cancelling a health premium from that particular party. I don't know where all the resources come from to do all of these things. I appreciate the comment, but I would hope that at some point you'd be able to tell us how we're going to fund these things, given the tax cuts that you're proposing and given the reduction in the health premium that your party has—and then, of course, on the third party side of things, this is just dismissed. There are never enough resources put into anything, when it comes to the third party side. I've talked about this a few times before. I don't particularly care to stand up here and throw stones, but occasionally I guess we have to. We know that from 1990 to 1995 we accumulated \$55 billion of debt in this particular province. I haven't calculated, perhaps somebody has—if somebody knows the number, shout it out to me—the impact of interest expense that we have accrued from 1995 to 2008 as a result of those five years of third party rule in the province of Ontario and what that interest expense, had it not been there, would have allowed us to do in terms of enhanced public services in the province of Ontario.

When we came in, in 2003, the interest expense on the provincial debt was around \$11 billion, roughly speaking, if I remember correctly. Of that \$11 billion, I would have to say the majority of it accrued to the province of Ontario's books from those five years from 1990 to 1995, I would assume. So I can say that if—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: No, it was Mr. Peterson.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I don't think it was.

So I can suggest that if we did not have—

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Well, I think that Mr. Davis ran deficit budgets for about 14 consecutive years, if I remember correctly—not that everybody is completely clean on this issue.

In five years, \$55 billion of debt, the interest expense that is applied to that—had that not been there or had it even been reduced, how much more could we have been doing to provide enhanced public services in the province of Ontario?

Eleven billion dollars, if I remember correctly, was about the amount of money that we were spending on the

entire hospital system when we came into government in 2003. That number has gone up significantly since then.

I've said a bit of this before. I talked about nothing happening on this type of issue from the third party in 1992. The fact that a particular private member's bill offered no choice to the people who might want to unionize and who might want to have a choice in their bargaining agent—even though I think that most people here, should this legislation pass, would anticipate that it's likely that OPSEU will end up being the bargaining agent. It speaks to the continued theme from this particular party about wanting to pretend that they represent working families. But I guess teachers were not working families—this coming from a party, of course, that brought in the social contract. How can we spend some time talking about a piece of what is a labour bill and not remind people about the social contract that came in in the early 1990s, perhaps the most egregious piece of labour legislation ever brought in in the province of Ontario's history. This, from a party that likes to pretend they are labour friendly and that they are there for the working families. Nothing could have been done more strongly, I would suggest, by the third party to what they like to say is their core constituency than the social contract.

1740

I want to read a little bit here about what it is exactly that Bill 90 is going to do for the people, as I wrap up my remarks.

Bill 90, if passed, would establish two new bargaining units for colleges: one for part-time and sessional academic staff, and one for part-time support staff.

It would establish a certification process to allow part-time employees to unionize and bargain collectively.

It would establish a new employer bargaining council representing all colleges. This responsibility is currently held by a government agency whose members are OIC appointees.

It would modernize the general bargaining process for the college sector, giving the parties more ownership over the process and making it more in line with the Labour Relations Act.

I think it was the member from Nickel Belt who talked, and I think she was the only one, a little bit about the deemed strike provision. When I met with the members of OPSEU and the teachers in my constituency office last year—I can't remember when the meetings were—and in committee there were a couple of presentations on this proposed legislation as well. I want to read what it is that Whitaker will do and has suggested on this item.

The Whitaker report specifically recommended removing the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act's deemed strike and lockout provisions. This is a recommendation of Whitaker. I don't know him personally, but from what I understand, Mr. Whitaker is somebody who is well respected in the labour field, has a long history of activity in this particular field in the province of Ontario. It is Mr.

Whitaker who is making the recommendation. It was not a Liberal idea. It is he who's making the recommendation that it be removed. He talks about removing the CCBA's deemed strike and lockout provisions to modernize college collective bargaining to better serve the needs of students and the college system.

Mr. Whitaker says these provisions don't exist anywhere else. Removing them would bring colleges in line with the rules covering all other unionized workplaces in Ontario, including universities and schools.

We assume that during a strike, union members would conduct themselves in a way that respects students' rights to safety and that OPSEU would do all that is necessary to ensure this.

That's what Mr. Whitaker recommended when he drafted his report. His report was based on, as I understand it, extensive consultations before he in fact made his report known. It was debated here at second reading and also at committee, and we are here now for third reading.

So I think what we are here today finding before us is legislation that most people agree is long past due, a piece of legislation that since 1975 has not been amended in any significant manner and that will accommodate and allow part-time workers to bargain collectively for the first time in the history of the province.

The reason, it's important to remember, that part-time workers in this particular sector were somewhat left behind was that in 1975, at the time this particular legislation was brought through this House, that was almost the norm when it came to part-time workers in the province. It was not something that just applied to teachers and support staff in the college sector. A non-accommodation on bargaining rights for teachers and support staff in other sectors of the province was similarly not accommodated through legislation, as I understand it, through the Labour Relations Act.

So what we're seeing here today is our government addressing it for the first time, bringing it forward into the 21st century, and recognizing that there's a significantly large group of workers who have been left behind by a series of governments for a long, long time. There was a shortage of resource. The colleges found themselves unable to accommodate them. Part-time workers had a role. The colleges need the adaptability; they need the flexibility to be able to get people on a moment's notice.

We're very proud to be the first government in the history of this province that will be extending college collective bargaining rights in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): The time being 5:45, I declare this House adjourned. The House will begin again tomorrow morning, Tuesday, September 30, at 9 o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1745.

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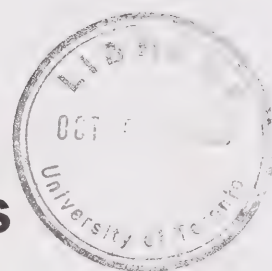
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Tuesday 30 September 2008

Mardi 30 septembre 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
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Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 30 September 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 30 septembre 2008

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Some of the members asked that I introduce the prayers, and I will. This morning we will be reciting an Islamic prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SERVICES AND SUPPORTS
TO PROMOTE THE SOCIAL INCLUSION
OF PERSONS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL
DISABILITIES ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LES SERVICES
ET SOUTIENS FAVORISANT
L'INCLUSION SOCIALE DES PERSONNES
AYANT UNE DÉFICIENCE
INTELLECTUELLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 25, 2008, on the motion for third reading of Bill 77, An Act to provide services to persons with developmental disabilities, to repeal the Developmental Services Act and to amend certain other statutes / *Projet de loi 77, Loi visant à prévoir des services pour les personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle, à abroger la Loi sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle et à modifier d'autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate? The member from Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you, Speaker. I understand neither of the other two parties is going to be debating this morning.

For people listening and watching, we actually are present to debate Bill 77, known as the Developmental Services Act. If this hasn't been explained to people, the long title is An Act to provide services to persons with developmental disabilities, to repeal the Developmental Services Act and to amend certain other statutes.

I can say for the official opposition that we support this piece of legislation, but we feel there is need for further consultation. There was some consultation in the middle of the summer, perhaps not the best time for people to come forward with any concerns they have with this proposed legislation—and it is proposed legislation, it is a bill; it is not law as yet. It's very important for those families, people affected, children who have disabilities, to ensure that their voice is heard.

This is a piece of legislation that was just introduced in April of this year, and I personally feel that more time

is in order, essentially, to ensure that we get this right. I think it's very important for members in this House from all three parties to continue to address this issue. I might say that the other two parties present have actually skipped their rotation. I'm not sure why. It's early in the morning, but I think it's very important for the government to continue to let us know what they're doing with this particular piece of legislation.

One interest I have with respect to people and young people with disabilities is the opportunity that is out there that comes from the private sector; it doesn't necessarily come directly from government. I'm referring to those good employers who take the interest and go out of their way to bring a person onto staff, onto their team, to help out in their workplace. Money changes hands, of course: When one works, one expects to be paid. However, we have millions of people who put in millions and millions of volunteer hours.

But this kind of program, from my perspective, isn't necessarily about the money. It's an opportunity for young people to join a grocery store chain, for example, to assist in that particular role or slot within that organization so that they can do well and contribute to the organization. They are paid; however, they gain so much more. They gain the benefits of a work environment. So many of our friends develop through a work environment. They're able to access the camaraderie, the esprit de corps, if you will, in a well-run organization.

This has come up a number of times over the years on the finance committee, where various advocates for people with disabilities have approached the witness table and testified. As I recall, the third party, the NDP, agree with the Conservatives on this one, that we feel it is inappropriate that so much of this money earned by people on ODSP, for example, who are working is clawed back if they go over a certain level. It leaves very little opportunity for people who are already dependent on government in many ways, and certainly dependent on their families, to, in a sense, be locked in or to have that relationship routinized somewhat, where there is essentially a negative sanction for these people to work, to accrue extra money and to save this money. Any money earned over a certain level is clawed back. I think that's one area that we, as legislators, could take a look at.

With respect to this bill, the Developmental Services Act, I hope that it will continue in the spirit of this employer program where people are offered the opportunity to work. This last Thursday night I attended the second annual employer awards evening. It was held in Brantford. It's sponsored by an agency called Abilities First.

The particular catchment area there—we met in Brantford and had a great evening: great speakers, a good dinner, of course. It's an area that covers not only Brantford, the city, but also Brant county and also my riding of Haldimand–Norfolk. The mission of this particular agency essentially is to continue to develop and improve on the relationships between employers in the community and people who have disabilities. To their credit, they seem to be doing a very good job. I attended last year as well.

There are other agencies as well who build on this link between the workplace and people who may well have trouble getting into the workplace or even getting experience, even if it's volunteer experience. I think of the Ontario Works program. There are many other programs, and I don't have the list of all the other agencies here. Because I attended this evening so recently, I'd like to take an opportunity to commend a number of the companies and the stores that opened their doors to people with disabilities and essentially put them to work.

0910

I think of Ted Swent of A. Swent and Sons. This is a welding and metal fabricating shop down in Rainham Centre, which is down in the south end of Haldimand county, just a mile or so north of Lake Erie. They received an award the other night from Abilities First for opening their doors for this program. I do recall a number of years ago, one of the employees there, if I'm not mistaken, was injured in a motorcycle accident—I may not have my facts straight—and ended up in a wheelchair and made the assumption that his career with the heavy lifting and moving steel around and welding was over. As I recall, the owner, Ted Swent, with the co-operation of his sons, indicated to him, “No, you're not leaving. We're going to train you to be a draftsman.” That was the story that I heard. I give that particular company a lot of credit, and through that company, I do say thank you to all the other companies and the small businesses that take that initial first step and go out of their way to offer their facilities and their resources to better bring along somebody who, because of certain impairments, if you will, is having some problems.

I would like to take the opportunity to commend a number of other organizations that are part of this program: Cora's Breakfast and Lunch, the Five Oaks Christian Workers Centre, Airvent Metal Products, Haldimand county. There is a municipality of 40,000 people, and I would hope that all municipalities are taking advantage of this type of program, taking the time to work up a program to bring on people with disabilities.

There was another organization there that night called Helping Others Thrift Store, and Home Depot—again a very large organization. InStore Focus Inc. is a company that does the food display in companies like Zehrs. As I recall, a number of years ago at our hearings in London, the Zehrs corporation testified before the finance committee and explained how they as a large grocery chain benefit from having people in their workforce who have some of these barriers. I mention InStore Focus because

my son Brett is part of that organization. He works there and is paid to work there through the Abilities First program. I'm very proud to see that both my son and the people from InStore Focus were at this awards ceremony to be duly recognized for what they are able to pull off.

Again, my son, my family, my wife, we can attest to the valuable contribution that that program has made personally to our family. It gives our son an opportunity to go to work, to be part of the team, to continue to make friends and essentially just be part of it all and also to continue to have that independence that is so important to my son. He obviously grew up on a farm. He knows how to work. Going right back to the Mike Harris days, 12 or 13 years ago, my son was determined to get a real job. That was one expression that my son picked up from the media. That has always been his goal, and that will be his accomplishment.

Some other companies: Martin Building Maintenance, Mary Poppins Preschool, NCO Brantford, New Orleans Pizza—they're up in St. George—all these organizations received awards the other night. Prima Klean, Quic-Klean, Rosa Flora—a very successful greenhouse operation just outside of Dunnville who employ people. The Salvation Army in Caledonia: Why are we not surprised to see this name on the list? Sifton Properties: another very, very large organization. Wendy's restaurant, down on Icomm Drive in Brantford. The Zehrs food market in Caledonia received an award, and also the Brantford Golf and Country Club, where we had the ceremony. I met the young fellow who works at the golf club and I met his manager. Those guys work together; they make a really good team, and it was a pleasure to speak with those two.

As I said, I'll use my son Brett as an example. He knows how to work; he goes looking for it; he's not afraid of work, like a lot of kids who grow up in the country and in the cities. He's not afraid of work, and has never allowed his particular disability—he has a visual impairment—to get in the way of his ambitions or his accomplishment of independence.

It is comforting to know there are agencies out there like Abilities First. They're present in our communities and always encouraging employers to tap into this labour pool. We know that this labour pool is full of very eager, enthusiastic young people. I know that many companies, many employers, help spread the word to other companies: “Just take that step. Just consider what you can do because of those young people that are out there.” They're diligent; they are punctual. I know this for sure. These people show up for work on time, no worries. I employ people; my staff are very, very punctual as well. But no worries about somebody being out all night and perhaps dragging themselves in halfway through a shift or something like that.

With respect to my staff in my constituency office, down in the town of Simcoe, many years back a young man was accessing help from our office. He had a number of issues. My staff, to their credit, took this fellow—his name's Ken—under their wings and set up a program with Ontario Works so that Ken could do his volunteer hours in my local constituency office.

We cannot get along without him. Ken is there every day, first thing in the morning. He reads all the newspapers. Like many members in this House, I subscribe to probably 12 or 14 newspapers, and if I need to know what is going on locally, I ask Ken. Ken is downtown Simcoe; he's out and about; he knows everything that's going on downtown. He fills me in on all the rumours, if you will, the gossip, the happenings or what's going to happen. We have discovered a number of times that we cannot get along without Ken. He has proved to be invaluable at that certain time when you need somebody there in a hurry. When something very important needs to be done, Ken has pulled that off for us.

By the same token, with Ken being in our office, we've seen a change in him. I know it gives him, obviously, a sense of belonging. I have a great staff. I can understand why he comes in every morning: a sense of belonging, a sense of accomplishment. I will say too that on those occasions when Ken isn't able to come in in the morning, my staff are concerned.

Ken has learned a great deal from this arrangement with my office, and our staff and I personally have learned a thing or two about the things that Ken knows.

In these types of programs, small actions can make a world of difference. Everybody should have the right to work to the best of their abilities, and the right to be part of a team and to form friendships and to be a full working member of our society. That's one reason why, in principle, I support Bill 77 and other bills of this ilk.

I understand the government unions have a problem with this, and that may have something to do with the funding arrangement, this concept that will be enshrined in this legislation to ensure that there is direct funding through various channels, but direct funding to families and people dealing with some of these issues. Again, that's why I think it's very important to go beyond just the four days of consultation this summer.

0920

We do know of many of the problems, the horror stories, if you will, of people dealing with some of these issues. There's a family in my riding who have a teen-aged daughter with a neurological disorder called Rett syndrome. I don't know a lot about Rett syndrome, but the way things are currently, the family receives money through Easter Seals for toiletry items for their daughter. However, they have to keep the receipts for two years, for example. Again, I just think there are some better ways of doing this.

We're told—this may be government figures—that there are about 40,000 people who could be classified as disabled. I read in the *Toronto Star* a number of 300,000 people who are disabled. I pose this question: Why is there this big discrepancy between the government figures of 40,000 disabled when I read in the paper there are 300,000?

I am concerned that, like many of the other pieces of legislation that this government has brought forward, this is being rushed through. I say that because the government has not spoken on this this morning. They skipped

their turn. I don't know why they would want to do that. This is their bill; this is their legislation. This is their action step or commitment to bring this forward. I don't want to see this rushed through. I don't want to see any important amendments overlooked.

The consultations were fast-tracked. There were meetings in Ottawa, Timmins, London and Toronto. Everybody had 15 minutes not only to speak but also to receive questions. It occurred in August, and it came before the social policy committee. Those people who did present obviously had one goal, and that was to find the best possible services for their loved ones. I will say, we know the people who presented did a very good job; they were able to get time away from work and did a very professional job. I think we have to do the right thing to honour the time and commitment they put into this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments related to the member for Haldimand-Norfolk's presentation on Bill 77?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's always a pleasure to comment on my colleague from Haldimand-Norfolk. He raises some excellent examples of why it is important that Bill 77 and the Developmental Services Act be updated, because as he pointed out, it is quite a dated piece of legislation—I believe 35 years since the last amendment.

He's also raised how differently we, as a society, have approached inclusiveness and the importance of inclusiveness in Ontario and for our developmental services sector. I was pleased to hear him talk about the examples in his riding where employers have embraced the value of having individuals with developmental disabilities work in their business and across society, because as I pointed out in my speech, we all benefit when we add the diversity that is so much a part of what Ontario is. So I was pleased to hear him raise some of those examples.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

I will return to the member for Haldimand-Norfolk, who has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I thought there would be some participation from the other party. I thought there would be perhaps somewhat of a rebuttal from the government, but hearing none, it looks like the opposition is driving the show on this bill.

I thank the member from Dufferin-Caledon. I didn't hear her speech in the House but I read the transcript, and to her credit she painted a picture using some examples within her local riding and addressed the work that is being done by local agencies. I understand too that as a result of that consultation and the agencies that came forward, a number of agencies are not happy with this legislation. I'm continuing to go through the transcripts of those hearings to find out from the horse's mouth just what the problems are, what we heard.

We're still in September, so the hearings were held just last month. We have to find out what is on people's minds with respect to this, and much of it, I think, does relate to funding issues and future funding issues. We know that given some of the problems we're hearing

about this bill, a number of amendments are in order. If those amendments are not successful in being passed and being implemented, then I am obviously not too interested in this kind of legislation, if it's going to either set us back or hold us up or just cater to somebody in the backrooms.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to rise and participate in this debate on Bill 77. I want to approach this debate from the standpoint of my constituents whose lives this bill was intended to improve. Those are people with developmental disabilities and their families. I want to say at the outset that I regret that I will have to vote against this bill on behalf of my constituents, who when this bill was first tabled by the minister were very optimistic, as were we in the official opposition, because it was a long time coming that this act that addresses the issues of people with developmental disabilities be revised and brought up to date and that there be legislation in place and programs in place that in fact create the kind of independence and integration into our communities that people with disabilities deserve.

But what we observed was that while we have a bill that is very strong in stating the purpose of the bill—and that was where the focus was when the minister initially presented the legislation—there is a significant gap between what is stated as the mission and objective of this legislation, and what we actually have and what will actually happen in our communities.

I want to read for the record what was stated by the Ministry of Community and Social Services in May 2006, as the vision and principles for this legislation. I quote: "Transformation of the delivery of supports to people who have a developmental disability is based on the overarching principle that people who have a developmental disability are people first, and focuses on independence, dignity and self-reliance for people with a developmental disability. The fundamental vision is to support people to live as independently as possible in the community and to support the full inclusion of Ontarians with disabilities in all aspects of society."

0930

I fully support that objective. Every member of our caucus in the official opposition was enthusiastic when we heard and saw those words, because truly that should be the objective of not only this legislation but the programs that then empower the implementation of that mission.

It was very clear, however, once we looked at the details of the legislation and stakeholders had an opportunity to participate in those consultations through public hearings, that the stated objective and mission of the legislation was being missed, that the needs of people with developmental disabilities and their families would not be met through this legislation. The result was that we put forward some 66 amendments to this legislation, encouraged by stakeholders, by people with developmental disabilities, by their families. We pleaded with the

government to consider the implementation, the adopting, of those amendments so that we could in fact have not only a revised piece of legislation, but one that actually works and supports the people it pretends to help.

Not even one of those amendments was adopted by the government. They were amendments that would have put in place some very practical direction and would have truly held out hope for people with developmental disabilities and their families in this province. But not one amendment was accepted. I tell you that as a result of that, it came to light that what we have here is a piece of legislation that basically, in the final analysis, when all is said and done, will simply create additional bureaucratic structure, will force people with developmental disabilities and their families into slots that the government has predetermined would be the solution for their individual lives. Rather than empowering people, it actually restricts people into what the government feels is appropriate for them. We can't support that and we will not support that. We will continue to argue on behalf and advocate on behalf of people with developmental disabilities and their families that they are the ones who should be entrusted with the resources and with the funding because they know best what is right for their daughter or their son, they know what's right for their family members. We on this side of the House actually believe that those families can be trusted with that responsibility, because they want to be trusted with that responsibility.

I want to share with my colleagues some specific examples from my constituency. Those who are watching this debate will know that these are but single examples of families across this province by the hundreds and by the thousands who find themselves in identical circumstances. These families cannot comprehend how this government can in good conscience on one day make a pronouncement of funding and promises and continue to talk about the programs that they have in place in this province to help families and people with developmental disabilities, but the coffers are empty, so that when people make an application for these programs, they are told by local agencies charged with the responsibility to implement, or by the ministry itself, that there is no money left in these programs. So people have been put through the process of making application; their hopes are in the program. They remain optimistic until the final word is given them: "Sorry. We'll keep your application on file, but at this point in time, there is no money available, no hope. Stay tuned."

That is unacceptable, and I want to challenge the government to consider a motion that they put forward, that the Premier himself put forward, that was debated in this House and that our caucus supported unanimously yesterday—we supported the government in this House—and it was the fairness motion. It was a motion that the Premier put forward calling on federal politicians to implement a principle of fairness when it comes to funding health care, social services and many other areas of need across the country. The Premier called on the

federal government, every federal politician and every federal leader to adopt the principle of fairness when they consider funding of important services. We supported that, and now I call on the Premier and his colleagues and the Minister of Community and Social Services to re-read that motion, adopt the same principle of fairness when it comes to funding people with developmental disabilities and their families and ask themselves how they can justify, on the one hand, calling on their federal colleagues to be fair when it comes to funding, and yet turn their back on people within our province—over which they have total control of the budget—and in some good conscience still stand in their place and pretend that they're doing something by bringing forward legislation that in the final analysis they know full well will not make any difference in the lives of real people in our communities.

I want to read into the record a letter that I received recently from a constituent. They plead; it's a mother and a father. The daughter's name is Elaine.

"Dear Mr. Klees,

"We need you to advocate for us at the provincial level....

"At present our youngest daughter, Elaine, lives at home with us ... Elaine has Down syndrome and has benefited from the support from the special education department at her school to reach her full potential. She will continue to require supports to continue as an active member of her community.

"The Ministry of Community and Social Services states that 'as part of its commitment to build a more inclusive province, the government is working with individuals with a developmental disability, families, community organizations to build the foundation for the next generation of services for people with a developmental disability.'

"In January 2007, York Support Services Network ... from York region reported that 189 individuals with a developmental disability were on the community needs list awaiting financial assistance from the Ministry of Community and Social Services, for activities that encourage their personal development and help these individuals achieve their potential. In April 2000" York Support Services Network "reports there are 301 individuals in York region on the community needs list. The number of individuals seeking some financial support from the provincial government just keeps increasing.

0940

"In January 2008, Elaine, along with her friends and family members, completed a person-directed plan and made an application to the Passport initiative. The Family Service association of Toronto describes the Passport initiative as a provincial government initiative that provides opportunities for individuals who have a developmental disability and have left high school to find more ways to participate in their communities.

"In April 2008 we received notification from" York Support Services Network "that 'we (YSSN) cannot provide you with support from Passport at this time. Pass-

port is an ongoing initiative and your application will be kept on file and considered once additional funding becomes available.' Once Elaine completes high school she will join many others on the community needs list."

There is quite a gap between what the government states is available and what is actually made available to people in our community once they make the application to the program. I have a second letter, written by a mother and a father who have a son. His name is Evan. He has Down syndrome. I quote:

"Dear Mr. Klees,

"I am writing you to request your assistance. My husband and I have lived in this area all of our lives. We run a business here. We also have three sons. The middle one, Evan, is an outgoing and conscientious young man. Through his school, Evan is participating in a work experience program. This June, he will finish high school and is rather excited about upcoming graduation and prom.... He has attended inclusive schools with supports and will require supports to enable him to be productive and active in our community....

"This February, Evan and I made an application to the Passport initiative. The Passport initiative is a provincial government initiative that provides assistance to individuals with a developmental disability.... Since then, we have been notified by" York Support Services Network "that there is no Passport funding available.... His application will be kept on file for consideration when additional funding becomes available."

I don't know how the minister, how members of cabinet, how the Premier can continue to justify bringing legislation into this House, occupying the time of the Legislature, drawing people from across the province to public hearings under the guise that what is mobilized now is an attempt, a commitment, a promise on the part of the government to improve the lives of people with developmental disabilities and their families, and yet what is really happening is that while they may be getting some publicity about their intent, there is a huge gap between what is stated and what is done. I believe it's an integrity gap that this government has, and it's growing by the day—the integrity gap between what is stated as an intention and held out as a promise, and what is actually delivered to people every day.

I want to end my comments by calling on the government to do this: to revisit the intent as stated in the legislation, to take a very clear look at what it is that they promised this House when they brought in the legislation. I would ask them to revisit the 66 amendments that our caucus put forward, that our critic put forward during those public hearings with the support of families across this province. I would ask them, before they close the books on this and vote in favour of a piece of legislation that in fact is incomplete, that will entrench a bureaucracy that will do nothing to help people in this province, that they give it a second sober thought. I would ask that they then, on a broader basis, give serious commitment to developing a social services and health growth plan for the province of Ontario that takes into consideration the

needs of people in this province, especially in high-growth areas where the gap between the need and the actual service continues to widen. It's a serious gap that only the government of the day has the power to address. Surely, when this cabinet and the Premier look at all of the programs that they agree to fund every week in their cabinet meetings, they can prioritize this program that deals with the most vulnerable in our communities, people who cannot help themselves, and take the time to consider those needs first. When they do that, then they can, in good conscience, talk about a fairness principle.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: As always, my colleague from Newmarket-Aurora has brought Bill 77 back to what it is and what we should always remember it is: It's about individuals, it's about inclusiveness and it's about how to ensure that those individuals within our society with developmental disabilities can play a critical and important role in our society. He raised the Passport funding program and talked about how much work an individual and a family in his riding went through to apply for it, only to be told, like so many other people across Ontario, "No, there's no money." We've used a number of times the Family Alliance number that says over 2,890 people have applied for Passport funding in Ontario and only 254 have been successful. That's less than 10%. If we had 10% of the people applying for hospital beds receiving them, then there would be editorials, there would be marching in the street. If we had Ontarians applying for services for their children in our education system and only 10% received them, the parents of Ontario and the educators of Ontario would be livid. Yet for some reason the Liberal government has chosen to believe that individuals with developmental disabilities can apply for Passport and only 10% can receive it. It's unfair, it's unconscionable that we are talking about Bill 77, and we haven't solved the true problem: What are you going to do with all of those children, all of those adult children, who don't have the services because you have chosen not to make it a priority?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: The member from Newmarket-Aurora did an excellent job pointing out some of the flaws in the process to do with Bill 77, the Services for Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act. We supported this bill on second reading and then our critic, the member from Whitby-Ajax, and the member from Dufferin-Caledon did a lot of work. They spent four days in committee, they listened to the people that came before the committee. They put together some 66 amendments to the bill, and all 66 amendments were defeated by the government-controlled committee. So we've been trying to improve the bill. There are some significant flaws in the bill, so we will not be able to support it, and that's unfortunate.

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The member from Newmarket-Aurora brought up some specific cases to do with Passport funding. That's a

program I very much believe in: individualized funding that allows people with developmental disabilities to have the best quality of life, allows families to plan on the best services for their particular situation. All I can say is there must be a room full of those letters he was speaking about that are kept on file somewhere in one of the offices in Toronto. The numbers we see show that only some 5% of the people who apply are actually receiving the funding. I brought up a number of cases from my riding the last time I had a chance to speak to this.

I would say that the government does have an integrity gap, as was pointed out by the member from Newmarket-Aurora. They speak a good game, but when it comes to putting forward the money to deliver, they're just not there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I also wish to comment on the presentation this morning by Frank Klees, the member for Newmarket-Aurora. He drew an excellent analogy with respect to fairness, and what should be fair for federal-provincial relations should also be fair with respect to the issues we're debating this morning. MPP Klees also pointed out in more detail some of the flaws that are in this legislation and flaws that were highlighted during the consultation.

Our critic Sylvia Jones from Dufferin-Caledon made mention of the dearth of funding for this Passport program. In May of last year, the minister announced a \$200-million budget for developmental services. Out of that \$200 million, only \$6 million went to Passport funding. Nine million dollars was allocated to people with disabilities and their families to hire support workers to better enable them to be part of society and to be involved in community life. That was \$9 million out of a \$200-million budget. The rest of that money went to wages and what's referred to as infrastructure.

So as far as putting one's money where one's mouth is as far as this Passport program, we can take a look at the Hamilton area, where apparently 174 people applied for this Passport arrangement; six people were funded. In the London area, 262 people applied for this Passport arrangement; funding went to 11.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I, too, want to commend the member from Newmarket-Aurora for his presentation on Bill 77, which was concise and to the point and showed the problems with the bill.

I had a number of family members in our office who had developmental challenges in their family and who came to speak about the bill. The first thing they told me was that they went to the public presentation on Bill 77, and they were commending our representatives of the Conservative Party at the committee hearings for a job well done and showing an interest in what was being said and coming up with some suggestions that may be made to change the bill to better serve the people. They said that the government seemed to be going through the pro-

cess but they didn't seem to be listening to what was being said. It was a very simple presentation. These family members felt that if they would just put the money in place for the people who have been assessed and qualify for the Passport funding, this bill would not be required.

To make matters worse, because they put this bill in place and they put a new system in place to assess the need and eligibility for people who would be eligible for Passport funding, and they have no extra money in the bill, it means that they're going to take more resources from the front line. So even less than the 5% or 6% of the Passport funding that has been allocated is going to be funded, because we set up the new assessment centres to reassess the people who have already been assessed and are eligible and are not getting the money.

I think it would be better to put the money where it's required, rather than build a bureaucracy in Bill 77 and serve no one any better than they presently could be served.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'll return to the member for Newmarket–Aurora, who has two minutes to reply to the question.

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to thank my colleagues for their supportive comments, and especially Sylvia Jones for her work on this bill, along with Christine Elliott.

I want to make reference to one final letter that I want to leave on the record. I sent this to the Honourable Deb Matthews on August 19. It refers to David, who is autistic. In the letter, I state that his mother "received a letter in April 2008 advising her that although she is eligible she will be placed on a wait list for services. I am told that there has been no funding available for families needing respite services since January 2008."

The letter goes on to say to the minister: "The distress for families with children with severe disabilities is tragic. Not only will David wait for years on the intensive behavioural intervention services list, but the family is left to cope without any respite services. I trust that you would agree this is unacceptable."

"On behalf of my constituents, I would ask you to initiate an immediate review of the special services at home program and funding available to residents of York region."

I received a letter back from the minister on September 18, about a month later, basically telling me, "The concerns you raised regarding special services at home fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Community and Social Services. I have taken the liberty of forwarding your letter to the Honourable Madeleine Meilleur, Minister of Community and Social Services, for her consideration." I have yet to hear from the minister.

It's another example of how families in this province are left to cope on their own, are given many promises and many commitments and now new legislation, but are left without the resources to deal with the challenges that they face.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? Are there any other honourable members who wish to participate in this debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: On a point of order, Speaker: If no members from the Liberal Party or the NDP are willing to speak, I'm happy to speak some more on this bill. There's much to be said. If I can have the—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member must seek the unanimous consent of the House in order to achieve that. Is that what you're asking for?

Mr. Frank Klees: I would seek unanimous consent to speak further on this important bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Newmarket–Aurora is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to continue his remarks.

I've heard a no.

Mr. Toby Barrett: On a point of order, Speaker: I did present this morning, but I had additional comments in my presentation. I would request to have a few more minutes.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: On a point of order—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I will deal with them one at a time.

The member for Haldimand–Norfolk is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to continue his remarks on Bill 77.

I heard a no.

On a point of order, the Minister of Tourism.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Mr. Speaker, we've now heard from two members. I don't know if the rest are all going to plan on doing the same thing, but you have ruled, I think, or perhaps you should rule that that is an inappropriate point of order to be raising. They can seek unanimous consent, but I don't believe it's a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It is indeed a valid point of order to seek the unanimous consent of the House to ask for something to be done.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is this the same point of order? I've already ruled on it.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): No, I've already ruled on it. Please take your seat.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): No. Please take your seat.

Interjection.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the member for Newmarket–Aurora to please take his seat, since I've already ruled on the point of order. Thank you very much.

Madam Meilleur has moved third reading of Bill 77, An Act to provide services to persons with developmental disabilities, to repeal the Developmental Services Act and to amend certain other statutes.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Pursuant to standing order 9(d), this vote is deferred until routine proceedings this afternoon.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Orders of the day? I recognize the Minister of Tourism.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Mr. Speaker, I seek consent for the House to recess until question period at 10:45.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is there consent to recess the House until 10:45? Agreed?

Interjection: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): No. Orders of the day.

INCREASING ACCESS TO QUALIFIED HEALTH PROFESSIONALS FOR ONTARIANS ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 VISANT À ACCROÎTRE L'ACCÈS DES ONTARIENNES ET DES ONTARIENS AUX PROFESSIONNELS DE LA SANTÉ QUALIFIÉS

Resuming the debate adjourned September 29, 2008, on the motion for second reading of Bill 97, An Act to increase access to qualified health professionals for all Ontarians by amending the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 / Projet de loi 97, Loi visant à accroître l'accès des Ontariennes et des Ontariens aux professionnels de la santé qualifiés en modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate on Bill 97?

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to add my comments to a bill that, quite frankly, is yet one more disappointment for many. I predict the same concerns: People who are going to be disappointed with the previous bill, Bill 77, that we have just debated—people who are expecting that this legislation will provide some support and hope—those same people will in fact find that there is a significant gap between the promise that is held out in terms of providing opportunities to practise medicine, to practise their professions, be it engineering or accounting, that this is yet more bureaucracy and leaves us short in terms of actually delivering on what was intended and what was promised.

I have the privilege of representing one of the fastest-growing regions in this country. In fact, my riding of Newmarket–Aurora will realize about an 18% growth. In the entire province of Ontario, my region alone will absorb some 18% of that growth for the province. That means that some additional 30,000 people will be in our region annually who were not there before. Many of those people who come into Ontario and have qualified as immigrants come here with the expectation that they will be able to practise their profession. In fact, the immigration system that we have in this country provides a significant advantage in terms of their assessment in the point system that is being used to qualify applicants as

immigrants. Significant advantage is given to those who have a profession, and yet, notwithstanding the fact that these individuals are granted immigrant status and come to this province on the assumption that they will in fact be able to work in their profession, earn a living and provide for their families, they end up here without the opportunity to work. In fact, they're relegated all too often to doing work for which they are considerably overqualified.

You can imagine what that does to a family. You can imagine what the impact is on the individual. I have had many examples of constituents in my office who appeal to me, often under great emotional stress. They show me their documentation, they show me their qualifications, whether it be a doctorate, whether it be an engineering degree, whether it be other professional qualifications—and they're very proud to present me with their qualifications, their track record and their work experience in other jurisdictions—and yet they can't find a job here in their own profession. They are relegated to doing other work. I often have said that in York region one of the fastest ways to find a doctor is to call 967-1111, because the chances are that whoever is delivering that pizza may well be qualified as a surgeon—unable to practise here. The barriers are up.

In this legislation before us, rather than having a dynamic piece of legislation that tears down those barriers, what we have here is basically a default mechanism. We essentially have a bill that says to our several colleges, "This is now your responsibility. This is now your responsibility to ensure that the barriers are brought down. It's your responsibility to ensure that foreign-trained doctors, foreign-trained professionals, can have an easier transition into productive work here in this province."

Unfortunately, what this bill doesn't address is how we get from where we are today to this nirvana that's being prescribed by the government, in their pronouncement, in their promise and in their release, in terms of how this legislation now gives hope to foreign-trained professionals. What it doesn't address and what the several colleges are asking the government, without any response, is, "Where are the resources coming from that will allow us to in fact put in place the programs that are necessary to enable that transition?" What we're not being told is what the government intends to do to ensure that those resources are in fact made available. We're not told what the time frame is going to be. We're not told how those colleges are expected now to cope with the additional responsibility and yet meet their regulatory mandate to ensure that the standards of their profession are upheld.

What I would ask the government is, is it your intention to ask the colleges to compromise those standards? If that is the case, I speak on behalf of the people of Ontario who say, "No. That isn't what we want." We want the colleges to ensure that we have the highest standards of professional conduct, the highest standards, whether it be for doctors or whether it be for the engineering pro-

fession or any other profession. We won't stand for any compromise, but what we do want is that there be access. We want programs in place that will, on a practical level, ensure that foreign-trained doctors, surgeons and engineers—professions at all levels—receive the appropriate consideration for their training, education and work experience, so that when they come to this country, when they come to Ontario, they are given credit and recognition for their ability to become active participants and productive citizens in this province, which is what they want to be.

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The barriers that need to be taken down are not standards but, rather, practical transitions so that their foreign training and experience can find an equivalency rating here in the province of Ontario, so that when a potential employer, when a potential hospital, when the Ministry of Health is considering their qualifications, they can in practical ways assess that individual's qualifications.

As the Progressive Conservative caucus, we've made very specific recommendations. We have tabled those. We have had public deliberations on them. We've had public consultations. I would urge the government, as they consider this legislation, to take into consideration that very practical document that sets out very clearly how that foreign education, training, experience can in fact be taken into consideration as an Ontario equivalency.

We're proposing that—in a time when technology is so readily available—when an individual is in the process of making an application to immigrate to this country, at that very time they begin their equivalency application and at that point in time, they can begin to do their Ontario equivalency training. Regardless of what profession it is, they begin the process of ensuring that when they reach Ontario, they already are familiar, they have been pre-qualified, and there is already an understanding of what the expectations are here in the province of Ontario. That will not only prevent many months and, in some occasions, years of waiting times when individuals and families are in a no man's land in terms of not knowing where the next job is coming from, whether or not there's going to be an opportunity to find gainful employment within their own profession, but they get here and they're off to a running start. From the very beginning, they can be productive and know that the education and the experience that they've gained in their country of origin can be put to practical application here in their new home. It's a practical recommendation that I would ask the government to seriously consider for implementation.

I would suggest that we need to look very carefully at what, in fact, the barriers are. I give you an example of a surgeon who came to see me as a constituent. Extensive background: He is teaching medicine at a university here in the province of Ontario, but he's not allowed to practise. That's the kind of frustration that professionals are facing in the province of Ontario. You're good enough to teach others to perform surgery, but you're not good enough to perform surgery yourself. How can that be

reasonable, and how can that be rational, and how can that be justified? He looked to me, as a member of the provincial Legislature, to help him figure this out, to reason it through. I had to admit to him that it makes no sense to me and I would take it to the Minister of Health, which I did. I wrote the Minister of Health a letter, provided my constituent's extensive background, and asked the Minister of Health to explain. That was months ago. I have yet to hear from the Minister of Health. I suspect the reason the Minister of Health isn't responding is because it's difficult to respond and still sound reasonable. The answer perhaps is in this legislation that we have before us in the form of Bill 97, An Act to increase access to qualified health professionals for all Ontarians by amending the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991.

So I read with some interest this one-page bill here. I found it difficult to comprehend how this was going to do what the long title of the bill promises, because under section 2.1 here is what the bill states: "It is the duty of the college to work in consultation with the minister to ensure, as a matter of public interest, that the people of Ontario have access to adequate numbers of qualified, skilled and competent regulated health professionals." Well, that's interesting. I tried to parse this in many different ways. I tried to find how that would work and what the end result of this might be. I have not been able to come up with an answer. What I would expect, hopefully, is that we will all be enlightened in the course of the next number of months as this bill is reviewed by stakeholders, by professionals, by the college, how we're going to achieve this. Perhaps the Minister of Health has some hidden regulations somewhere that will expand the bill and that will provide the appropriate structure to ensure that the objective of the bill is finally achieved.

The reality is this: We have literally more than a million Ontarians who are without a family doctor. In the region of York alone, I get calls on a regular basis from constituents who not only do not have access to a family doctor, but when it comes to specialists, the waiting lists are months. Just two weeks ago, I was speaking with a constituent who said this to me: "I've been advised there's a good chance that I have cancer. I now will have to wait at least two months before I can see a specialist." That was her comment. I can't imagine, in Ontario, where we boast about having one of the best health care systems in the world, a resident of this province is told that based on tests, there's a good chance that she has cancer, but she now has to wait two months to see a specialist to either confirm that or to begin to receive treatments. Something is fundamentally wrong.

What we don't see from this government is action. We continue to see excuses from this government. Now we have a one-page bill that, based on the announcement of the government, is going to increase qualified health professionals for all Ontarians. How? By amending the Regulated Health Professions Act.

Amending the Regulated Health Professions Act is not going to increase the supply of qualified health profes-

sionals for all Ontarians. Action will do that. Resources will do that. The one single thing that will do that is to increase the number of residency positions within hospitals so that doctors who are qualified with foreign credentials can actually prove themselves and integrate into our health care system.

That doesn't take legislation. What it does take is a few dollars and a direction from the Ministry of Health that they are going to provide the resources, increase the number of residency positions and actually get foreign-trained doctors to begin to participate in our health care system in this province.

But that's too practical. That's too practical for this government, and so what we have is legislation that will do nothing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: Could I ask for unanimous consent to recess until 10:45?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Ask for a point of order first.

Mr. Norm Miller: On a point of order then, please.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Parry Sound-Muskoka is seeking unanimous consent of the House to recess until 10:45. Agreed? Agreed.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): This House stands in recess until 10:45 a.m., later on this morning.

The House recessed from 1023 to 1045.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please be seated. I'd like to draw the members' attention to the presence at the table of a visiting table officer: Mr. Michel Bonsaint is Director of General Parliamentary Affairs and Director of Research in Parliamentary Procedure at the National Assembly of Quebec. Mr. Bonsaint is visiting the Legislative Assembly throughout the week. Michel, welcome, and welcome to the table. We just may have to do something about your mauve tie, though.

On behalf of page Karlie Potts, I would like to welcome the following guests to the public gallery today: Barbara-Ann Potts, her mother, Austin Potts, her brother, and Lyndall Bassett, a family friend. Welcome today.

On behalf of the member from Hamilton Centre, we would like to welcome representatives from the Workplace Bullying Institute: Dr. Gary Namie, Marina Beacock, Angela Monaghan and Andrew Knoop.

On behalf of the member from Mississauga-Erindale, I would like to welcome to the House Mrs. Gurkanwal Kaur, president of the Women's Wing, Punjab Congress, and former minister, government of Punjab, India; Baldev Mangat and Mrs. Manjit Mangat; and Mukand Pandher and Manjit Singh Bhoondi, who are seated in the members' gallery. Welcome today.

It is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Premier, the economic news out of the United States has the people in this province justifiably on edge. They see the value of their savings plummeting, seniors worried about their retirement and families anxious about being able to keep their home and put their kids through school. The warning signs have been out there for at least two years, Premier, and during that time you've chosen to ignore them. Only yesterday did your finance minister finally acknowledge that the province is in troubled times. Your policies of high taxing, high spending and rapid growth in regulation have placed this province's economy in a difficult place, to say the least. Premier, can you assure us that next month's economic statement will address those issues and concerns that we've been drawing to your attention for over two years?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The first thing I do want to acknowledge the anxiety felt by many Ontarians in the aftermath of the serious issues unfolding, not only south of the border but in our stock market here in Canada. I want to assure them as well that we will do everything we can to maintain strong support for all those public services that Ontario families have to be able to count on, whether that's the education of their kids, health care for everybody in the family, or retraining opportunities for folks who are caught up in this economic dislocation and have lost their jobs. I also want to say that I believe that Ontarians don't believe that somehow what is unfolding in the province of Ontario is exclusively the result of either our economic policies or industrial agendas in Ontario. I think they understand that what is happening south of the border does indeed have an impact on what we are experiencing here in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: We've always acknowledged that, and one can only hope that the Premier and his colleagues are going to begin to take this situation seriously. Yesterday at his press conference, the Minister of Finance indicated that in the face of our economic challenges, he's an advocate for prudence. That's the definition of conversion on the road to Damascus. This is a government that has increased spending by 40% in the five years calling for prudence, and that's pretty tough to swallow. Premier, does prudence mean allowing the Minister of Education to increase her spending on hotels by 46% in one year—3.5 million tax dollars—or the Attorney General to increase their hotel spending by 48%? Is that your government's definition of "prudence"? Is that what your minister is advocating?

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Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm very confident that any expenses incurred by my ministers in the pursuit of their

responsibilities are indeed responsible and prudent and in keeping with public expectations.

I will also say that we have worked long and hard to restore the quality of our public services. I think from any objective basis, things are better in our schools today. We are reaching out to more Ontario families with better health care. We are doing more to better protect public safety, whether you're talking about what's happening on our streets with policing or in protections for the quality of the water that comes out of our taps. I think Ontarians also would acknowledge that we're making serious new investments in the quality of our infrastructure, whether we're talking about roads, bridges or new investments in public transit. There's a cost associated with those things, but we will always maintain a great deal of respect for Ontario taxpayers, who are giving us money in trust for them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I'd like to see the dictionary the Liberals operate from.

Premier, your Minister of Finance has finally acknowledged that the province is facing economic challenges. Others recognized this at least two years ago, but you've continued on your merry spending and taxing ways. Premier, when your minister talks about prudence and restraint, when jobs are fleeing the province and people are worried about their future and the future for their kids, what kind of a message does your government send out with its spending practices? What kind of message did you send out when you spent up to \$2.7 million of taxpayers' dollars on a casino party for you and your friends in Windsor?

Premier, before you start cutting program spending, will you look at the imprudent, offensive and excessive spending habits of your own caucus colleagues?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, we will do everything we need to do to demonstrate in a real way our respect for taxpayer dollars. One of the things that we are not prepared to do, contrary to what the Conservative Party would have us pursue, would be to cut taxes by over \$3 billion. In fact, they're talking about total tax cuts of \$5 billion. I'll tell you why we're not prepared to do that: because it will compromise the quality of our public services.

We do have a plan in place to further reduce business taxes in Ontario. We could go further and we could go faster if we stopped giving 4% of our GDP to Ottawa for distribution to the rest of the country. The opposition feels that that is not a real issue, but I refer them to Mr. Drummond's report, where he refers to that with a great deal of clarity and conviction. I wish they would join us in making that legitimate request for fairness from Ottawa.

C. DIFFICILE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is going to be for the Premier. Premier, I wish you would have joined

the other provinces and started to address the issue of C. difficile as early as Quebec, Manitoba and others did.

Yesterday, we heard from the Auditor General when he released his special report, because your government has refused to do an overview or any investigation. He summed it up best when he said that there is much more work to do. It was clear from the Auditor General's report yesterday that there are no clear, consistent rules from the Ministry of Health for infection control and protection. Further, the Minister of Health has failed to coordinate and provide oversight to the hospitals to give them the best advice and to check and make sure that they're following the advice.

Can you explain, Premier, why you have left the hospitals to fend for themselves in dealing with these deadly infectious diseases, which resulted in 500 preventable deaths?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I welcome the question, and we welcome the auditor's report. It's very helpful in terms of all of us coming to grips with C. difficile.

I took the opportunity to speak with Dr. Michael Baker, who's head of our patient safety here in Ontario. One of the things that he impressed upon me was that 5% of Ontarians are carriers, essentially, of C. difficile at any one time. It's not something that we're going to eradicate. It's not like SARS, for example. You can't eradicate it; it's out there in the general population. But what we can and must do is be more aggressive in terms of preventing its spread and its introduction into our hospitals.

Let me tell you about some of the things we've done in that regard. As a result of public reporting, we now know, for example, that the number of cases is 50% higher in Quebec; they have a 50% higher incidence. In the UK, where they've had a program in place for seven years, they have a 300% higher incidence.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: To the Premier again: You know, it's all well and dandy that you're finally talking to some of the experts in the area of infection control. The reality is, you have known since the fall of 2003, when we had the outbreak in Peterborough, that there was a problem. That's been followed with other outbreaks in Burlington and Sault Ste. Marie, just to name a few. You set up a Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee, or PIDAC, and last week you were touting the fact that it had provided all sorts of good information to hospitals. One has to wonder what was going on with PIDAC when only one third of the funding that has been allotted to it has been spent.

I ask you, Premier, where did the remaining money go that should have been spent on giving hospitals the best possible advice on patient safety?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to begin by repeating something I said a moment ago, because I think it's very important in instilling a sense of confidence in Ontario families. I believe we are the second province in the country that is now publicly reporting the incidents of C. difficile in our hospitals. When we compare ourselves to Quebec, they have a 50% higher rate, and the UK, which has had an aggressive C. difficile reduction program in

their hospitals for seven years now, has a 300% higher rate—just so we have a few facts out there in terms of where Ontario stands in the grand scheme of things.

The other thing that we have done as a result of the information and advice that we've received is, we have in place now 203 infection prevention and control positions in the province of Ontario, which we are funding. We have now put in place infection control resource teams, people distributed among a number of hospitals who can come together in the face of an outbreak. We have also put into place more and more—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier. Final supplementary.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Isn't it sad for the families of the more than 500 people who died of C. difficile to, five years later, see the Premier finally assuming some interest in the issue of infectious diseases? I'm going to say to you today, Premier, for five years, you've known about the problem, and yes, you compare this jurisdiction to others, but we don't have data, and so the data you're comparing is not apples to apples and oranges to oranges. I've seen it too.

So I say to you today, are you finally going to do the responsible thing and answer the concerns of those individuals who have lost loved ones, and do the right thing and order an investigation so that we can get to the bottom of what caused it, why it happened, and are we confident today that every step is being taken to reduce the deaths and the disease itself?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm very confident that we're pursuing a very aggressive agenda here in the province of Ontario, particularly when you compare how we're doing in this jurisdiction to others in the international community.

I think one of the things that's worth drawing our attention to is some of the information found within the Auditor General's report where he says:

"Physician compliance started at 18% overall and increased to 28% by the end of their pilot program. Compliance rates for nurses started at 44% and were at 60% by the end of the pilot."

So what we're saying is that we had a pilot; it was very aggressive. At the end of that time, only 66% of nurses were doing what needed to be done and only 28% of doctors were doing what needed to be done. We're talking about washing our hands. So I think that, clearly, there is more work that can be done and I'm asking our professional community in particular to please follow the guidelines that have been in place for some time and simply wash your hands.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Premier. This morning, the Premier said that he believes some traditional manufacturing sectors in Ontario are likely about to vanish forever. We've seen 240,000 manufacturing jobs disappear in Ontario under the McGuinty government. Many more people are worried

about the possibility of losing their jobs. Will the Premier tell these worried Ontario workers which manufacturing jobs in Ontario are about to vanish forever?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I can say that we're going to continue to bring a decidedly different approach than the one that was advocated by my colleague the leader of the NDP. So, for example, we will, notwithstanding his objections, continue to find ways to work with the auto sector. He maintains that we should not do that, that we've had some instances where he feels that we have not been as successful as we should be. We intend to continue to find ways to work with the auto sector. We remain the single largest producer of autos in North America. We think there is a solid foundation there on which to continue to build. We think there's all kinds of room for innovation and new opportunity, especially when it comes to building greener products, more energy-efficient products. So there is a very good example of where I'm not prepared to give up on an industry, unlike my colleague opposite.

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The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: No one is talking about giving up on industry other than the Premier. These are your words, Premier. You were asked, "What parts of the economy are dead?" and you responded, "I am absolutely convinced that some parts of our economy are not coming back."

So I think you owe it to those worried workers, those workers who have lost their jobs, are losing their livelihoods and are now losing their homes. What parts of manufacturing in Ontario, according to Premier McGuinty, are absolutely dead? I think you owe it to those workers to answer that question, Premier. What part of the industrial economy is dead in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let's talk about some of the continuing successes in Ontario. In the last quarter alone, through the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, as it was then known, our government was involved with 11 separate projects, representing over 1,700 new jobs and \$60 million in capital investments. That was in the first quarter. Those success stories included NCO in Brantford, involving 500 jobs; the Energy Savings Group in Mississauga, 500 jobs; Dieffenbacher in Windsor, a \$9-million investment, 10 more jobs; Inter-Call Canada in Kingston, 300 jobs; Transcom Worldwide in London, up to 150 new jobs. We will continue to stay focused on new opportunities for the manufacturing sector in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I say to the Premier that people across Ontario have heard these boasts from the McGuinty government before. They heard about this wonderful call centre by Dell in Ottawa that received all kinds of government money and then, literally, thousands of workers got the pink slip.

Here is the reality: Under the McGuinty government, 240,000 hard-working Ontarians have lost their manu-

facturing jobs, and when the media asked the Premier, "What's your plan to sustain manufacturing jobs?" the Premier said, "Well, I believe that there are whole sectors of manufacturing in Ontario that are dead." If you believe that, Premier, I believe in all honesty you owe it to those workers to tell them what parts of the manufacturing economy in Ontario, according to Dalton McGuinty, are dead and are never coming back.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The leader of the NDP, my honourable colleague, prefaced his remarks by saying, "Here is the reality." I'll do the same thing. Here's the reality: The leader of the NDP says that we should not have partnered with Dell to invest in new training opportunities for the folks who were working there. He says we should not partner with the auto sector in the province of Ontario. If there's a guy who is walking around this province who is not prepared to do anything to stand up for the manufacturing sector, I think I see him sitting opposite.

We're prepared to roll up our sleeves, to take a few risks. From time to time we're going to stumble, from time to time we're going to fail, but we're not going to stop trying. We're working as hard as we can to stand up for working families in the province of Ontario.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton: To the Premier: I want to be very clear. When you write multi-million-dollar cheques to Dell and then Dell, a corporation that is very profitable, walks out of Ontario with millions of dollars in taxpayers' money and thousands of workers get the pink slip, I think that's wrong. When General Motors gets taxpayers' cheques in the range of \$265 million from the McGuinty government and thousands of GM workers get the pink slip, I think that's wrong. If you count those as your successes, Premier, then we are really in serious trouble.

We've advocated a real plan to sustain manufacturing jobs: a reasonable industrial hydro rate, a refundable manufacturing investment tax credit and a buy-Ontario strategy, such as they have in Quebec, to sustain manufacturing jobs. When is the McGuinty government going to get serious about sustaining manufacturing jobs instead of talking about the death of manufacturing jobs in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, what I would encourage the leader of the NDP to do is to sit down and talk to any of the folks at Dell, in whom we invested in new training opportunities and transportable skills, which they now have. Or if he was to speak to anybody at the CAW, who encourage us to continue to find ways to partner with the auto sector, I think he'd hear something different.

He made reference to a tax credit that he's talked about often. We bring a different approach. We have a plan in place to cut business taxes by \$3 billion over four years. When we put in place a tax cut for capital taxes, that was retroactive. That meant we could put cheques—

hundreds of thousands, millions of dollars—into the hands of our manufacturing sector right now, when they need it. They don't need it in the future; they need it right now, and that's what our policy effected.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I noticed that the loudest cheers about the cut in the capital tax came from banks and financial institutions. I understand that banks and financial institutions are in deep trouble in the United States, but the Premier himself said that banks and financial institutions are doing fine in Ontario. We're talking about manufacturing, not about cutting taxes for banks, insurance companies or oil companies. We're talking about manufacturing, which has been the heart and the soul of Ontario's economy. Other provinces are focusing their tax measures on sustaining manufacturing jobs. Tell us, why are you so proud of cutting a capital tax which mainly benefits banks and insurance companies and ignores the manufacturing sector?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Here's a quote from the CFIB report on manufacturing from September of this year. They say, "... we must acknowledge the tax relief that has been delivered over the past few years. Relief has been both vital and welcome in: corporate capital tax, corporate income tax (small business) and provincial property tax (former education) portion."

So I just can't agree with my colleague who says that somehow when we cut capital taxes for the forestry sector, for example, for the struggling auto sector, for other sectors within the broader manufacturing industry, where we've cut it and now eliminated it and in fact gave them a cheque as we eliminated it retroactively—I can't agree with him that this somehow is unhelpful for that sector. When we spoke with them, they said that the single most important thing we could do for them was exactly that. We've done that; we continue to talk to the manufacturing sector and we will continue to find ways to partner with them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The Premier says that the capital tax has had a significant, positive effect for the forest sector? Go down to the workers in Thorold and tell them that, as they have been told they're getting a pink slip for at least the next 30 days and possibly longer. Go to Thunder Bay and tell the people who used to work at Abitibi Mission, the people who used to work at Bowater and the people who used to work at the three sawmills and Cascades paper, the people who used to work at the other paper mill in Thunder Bay. Go to Red Rock and tell them that. All of those people are now out of work. You boast about the capital tax. Why are so many people continuing to lose their jobs in the very sector where you said it's had a positive influence?

Here is the issue: You say, in one breath, manufacturing is dead in Ontario. I think you owe it to those workers who are worried, who are desperate. Be honest with them. Tell them what sectors, according to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I think there's no doubt about it. It would only be helpful if the leader of the NDP were to acknowledge some of the tremendous change that has taken place within the Ontario economy. It is taking place and that creates some real challenges, not just for the economy as a whole, but more importantly, for families on an individual basis. I understand that, and I know that the leader of the NDP actually understands that as well. I think what we need to do is come together and prepare families for that change and speak to a brighter, more optimistic future which holds more opportunities for them.

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Notwithstanding the tremendous amount of uncertainty south of the border, there are some things we know for sure. For example, when you invest in the skills and education of your workers, you can't go wrong. When you support innovation to turn ideas into new technologies for sale to the world, you can't go wrong. When you invest in infrastructure to create jobs in the long term and enhance productivity in the long term, you can't go wrong. We'll continue to do the things that are tried and true while we look for new opportunities—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier. New question?

C. DIFFICILE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday again—I go back to the Auditor General's report—he recommended that the Ministry of Health require hospitals to track and report patient outcomes from C. difficile, which of course means deaths as well. Your own ministry officials recommended as far back as 2004 in the Peterborough report that that should be done, but you've chosen to ignore it. You've also said, though, that you will rely on experts. I want to quote Dr. Mark Miller, the head of infection prevention and control with Montreal's Jewish General Hospital, who told the Spectator in Hamilton on July 18 this year: "If they want to know the whole story on C. difficile, if they want the whole picture, then they have to count the number of patients dying."

I ask you today, Premier, when will you start to record the number of patients who are dying in our hospitals each month?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My colleague raises a really important issue, and it's the same thing that I put to the minister. He told me what Dr. Baker, who heads up patient safety for us, has been telling us: that there is yet no developed standard for determining whether or not a death was in fact caused by C. difficile. There are a number of elderly patients who are affected by C. difficile because, as I said, it's present in the general population, but right now there are no standardized criteria to determine whether or not your death was in fact so caused.

He's onto that. He's working to develop those standardized criteria. Once we have that in place, then we will provide the kind of reporting that my colleague seeks, which I think would be quite appropriate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: The Premier knows full well that other jurisdictions are able to make those determinations. Unfortunately, we've gotten into the mandatory reporting somewhat late, so we will continue to lag behind.

I want to now go to Dr. Allison McGeer. She said in November 2006, "There are patients dying as a consequence of the fact that we're not moving more quickly." Of course last spring, the Ombudsman said that the C. difficile deaths are a human tragedy of great proportions.

I want to tell you about Carole Partington. Her mother had C. difficile. She says, "Her belly was distended, her body fighting bouts of uncontrollable diarrhea." Premier, I've spoken to the families of the victims. They have described excruciating pain and a death without any dignity. In the face of all of this and the fact that these people want answers as to why their loved ones died, are you prepared to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm not sure that Hansard would have picked up the end of my colleague's question, but she's asking us yet again to pursue an independent inquiry or investigation. I'm not prepared to do that, for the reasons we've offered in the past. We think that we have all the information we need. I rely on experts in this regard. We've heard from Dr. Schabas, for example, the former Chief Medical Officer of Health for Ontario, and he says that, no, that would not be a productive exercise.

We've made some tremendous progress. Now, in the face of public reporting, we see that we really stand head and shoulders above other jurisdictions where they're reporting on these kinds of things. But that is of no real consolation to families who have been affected by this; I understand that. So we're going to pursue this as aggressively as we can and in particular we're going to make sure, as much as we can, that all of our health care professionals do practise good policy when it comes to handwashing, moving from one patient to the next and moving from one hospital room to the next.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Mr. Minister, in the weeks to come, hard-working Ontarians across this province will be getting a nasty surprise. All across Ontario, property owners will be receiving assessment increases averaging 20%. For those whose assessment increase is more than that, they're looking at a property tax increase. Under the McGuinty government's flawed market value assessment approach to property taxes, this will result in many seniors and other property owners on fixed incomes receiving double-digit tax increases.

How does the minister justify and explain his rejection of the freeze-till-sale property assessment model, which

we advocate and which is used across North America, in forcing seniors out of their homes?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I would remind the member and the people of Ontario listening to this that an assessment increase does not necessarily translate into a tax increase, number one. Number two, this government implemented a four-year phase-in of those assessment changes, and I would remind the member opposite that, accordingly, municipalities can make adjustments.

Our government's approach to this issue has been balanced. This gives stability and predictability to property taxpayers across Ontario. We believe it is the right response to the current value assessment and how we should respond on an ongoing basis.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Prue: Back to the minister. I think the minister knows full well that if your house appreciates in value more than the average, you will get a tax increase. That's the way it works.

We have advocated a freeze-till-sale model that would freeze new assessments until a property is sold. This would ensure that seniors and other fixed-income earners are not forced out of their homes because of skyrocketing property tax increases.

Why doesn't this minister admit that it is precisely at this time of financial volatility and declining property values that Ontario should reject the market-based approach to property taxes and bring in an assessment model that puts people first?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We share the member's concerns about the effect of property tax on seniors. I would ask him why he voted against our property tax credit for seniors.

The member opposite advocates freezing assessments. What you'll have is two seniors living next door to each other in different homes with different property taxes.

That party is devoid of real answers on these challenging questions.

We have laid out a system of property tax credits for seniors, a system of assessment that will be implemented over four years, that is balanced, prudent and will provide fairness between and among neighbours, will provide fairness between and among property tax classes. This system is the best approach to this.

I'd urge the member and the leader of the NDP to stop voting against property tax credits for senior citizens. You should be ashamed of your record on that particular issue.

RENT BANK PROGRAM

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, as you know, municipal service managers across Ontario felt the sting of the challenging economy when they noticed their rent bank funding drying up.

In Waterloo region, the rent bank was in dire straits this past summer. Waterloo Region Community Legal Services told you in a letter that a loss of rent bank funds would be a disaster for tenants and landlords.

Minister, I know you came through with funding, but some families need assurances that rent bank funding will be there in the coming years if they happen to fall short.

Minister, how can local service managers ensure the viability of the rent bank program without a long-term funding commitment from your ministry?

Hon. Jim Watson: I thank the member from Kitchener-Conestoga for the very good question.

The rent bank is a valuable tool. It prevents the eviction of individuals who are having short-term financial challenges. Brent Matthews, a rent bank recipient, summed it up when he said, "It was like angels came down to help us."

The rent bank is popular—

Interjections.

Hon. Jim Watson: I'm surprised the Conservatives are heckling the rent bank—because let me quote the member from Kitchener-Waterloo, who wrote to me on May 20 and said, "The Waterloo regional rent bank has proven to be a valuable resource to many tenants in the community.... The much-needed interest-free loans given by the rent bank are vital in helping people get past this rough patch in their lives and maintain their housing."

I thank the member from Kitchener-Waterloo for her support. I wish she'd talk to her colleagues and tell them to stop laughing at those people—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

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Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I look forward to hearing more from the minister, as you develop a long-term strategy. I thank the member from Kitchener-Waterloo for her support of the rent bank.

The rent bank is a valuable resource in fighting homelessness and poverty. I know our partners in Waterloo region such as the Homelessness and Housing Umbrella Group are supportive. Minister, can you tell me what this program means for Waterloo region and why all parties don't support the rent bank?

Hon. Jim Watson: The region of Waterloo received \$108,565 in new rent bank funding this year that the Premier had announced. This means that the region of Waterloo, to date, has received over \$659,000, which has prevented 550 evictions since 2004.

I have no idea why the NDP do not support the rent bank. The member from Beaches-East York said in this House, "It means almost nothing." The NDP poverty plan that was released this week did not mention the rent bank once. So I would ask members of the NDP caucus why they are turning their back on those 15,500 individuals who have staved off eviction as a result of the McGuinty government rent bank plan.

We were there in the past for the individuals who needed it, and we will be there in the future when we develop our long-term affordable housing strategy. This is a program that works and that helps those people who find themselves in difficult, short-term—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you minister. New question?

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Minister of Finance. Minister, as you know, the international liquidity crisis is impacting today on the pocketbooks of Ontario families and seniors. Not only are their life savings on a rollercoaster ride, with an 841-point drop—with some recovery today—on the TSX, but Ontario families are vulnerable because of their significant debt burdens. Economists and bankers are citing a risk that mortgage rates and consumer loan rates may increase and that lending practices will tighten as a result of the crisis. Your failed economic policies have made the squeeze on middle-class families and seniors even tighter through higher taxes, higher hydro rates and skyrocketing property assessments. Minister, what is your plan to give middle-class families and seniors a break during these very difficult times?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We laid out a plan almost a year ago that we will continue to follow and make adjustments to. I do want to say to the people of Ontario that our financial institutions remain stronger than their counterparts south of the border. Over the course of the last 24 hours, the Premier and I have spoken with the governor of the Bank of Canada, all of our provincial regulators, and we have spoken to the CEOs of our major banks and insurance companies. Yes, there is no doubt that there are challenges, and the member is quite accurate: Liquidity is a major issue. That issue is part of the bailout plan in the United States. It is our view and our hope that the US Congress will adopt some form of assistance, because this is very much a real problem in the US economy. The impact on the US economy, obviously, has an impact on us. We'll continue to implement our plan and continue a prudent course towards a balanced budget, recognizing that targeted tax cuts—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm pleased to hear the minister and the Premier at least recognize the challenge, but we want to see some action on this side of the House to address this risk to Ontario families. When John Tory and the Ontario PCs hosted our economic summit, we heard from Derek Holt, the VP of economics at Scotia Capital, who said that getting credit is going to be next to impossible for all but the businesses with the most stellar financial conditions. We heard from TD's chief economist, Don Drummond, yesterday that some 250,000 manufacturing jobs will disappear from Ontario in the next five years. Drummond says that the slowing economy is no excuse for inaction.

Minister, under Dalton McGuinty, taxes are way up, energy costs are way up, and red tape is getting thicker and thicker. What efforts will you make today to lower the tax and regulatory burden to help businesses create jobs in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I think the argument in the United States is very compelling: that the lowered corporate taxes and getting rid of regulation is precisely

what has put the American economy in this challenging position.

What I can tell the member opposite—and I have spoken to all of the leading economists—is that their plan will not work. We need a comprehensive plan that involves targeted tax cuts, which we've done. You need to invest in infrastructure, which we've done. We have in fact lowered hydro rates since we took office and have provided for a more reliable and secure source of power in this province well into the future. There is no doubt that there are enormous challenges in the international economy, and as the member opposite's interim leader pointed out here in the House, many of those challenges—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister. New question.

BREASTFEEDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. Breastfeeding is one of the most cost-effective ways to support healthy development of children. Health promotion starts with breastfeeding. When will your ministry listen to Health Canada, the Canadian Paediatric Society, the Registered Nurses' Association, Toronto Public Health—and the list goes on—and develop a provincial breastfeeding strategy based on the standard of the World Health Organization's baby-friendly initiative?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that it's principally through our public health units that we have in place programs to support breastfeeding. We require public health units to provide breastfeeding programs, and we give them funding at 75 cents on the dollar. The rest is a municipal responsibility. I'd like to put this latest development in some context: The fact of the matter is, we continue to support breastfeeding programs through our public health units.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: We agree that hospital and health unit breastfeeding programs are in place, but they have very limited resources and they lack coordination. Premier, breastfeeding is natural, but it is not easy. Women often need help in order to succeed, but breastfeeding programs are at the bottom of the priority list, so when funding is tight, those programs are the first ones to close. Dr. Jack Newman is a world-renowned breastfeeding expert. The program where he used to work closed in 2005 due to tight hospital budgets. A provincial breastfeeding strategy would not be expensive; it just needs your commitment. Will you do it? Will you agree to an Ontario breastfeeding strategy?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, we require that public health units provide breastfeeding programs through our 36 public health units. Funding for those kinds of programs supports these kinds of activities: information support lines; 24-hour advice lines where mothers can call; 48-hour follow-up from a nurse to new mothers; group parenting sessions on a range of topics, including breastfeeding; breastfeeding support during

home visits provided through the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program; and then working with the community to develop supportive environments for breastfeeding.

Again, I just want to make it clear to the member opposite, to Ontarians, generally, but mostly to new moms especially, that it is through our public health units that we have in place programs to support breastfeeding in the province of Ontario.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, when I talk to students in my riding of Ottawa Centre and from Carleton University about the value of post-secondary education, I hear time and time again that obtaining a college diploma or university degree is getting harder because costs are going up. I think it is very important to encourage our youth to continue on after high school, whether it be in a classroom or on-the-job training through an apprenticeship. But, Minister, students are finding it more difficult to pay for the increasing costs associated with higher education. There is tuition to pay for, textbooks to buy and living and transportation costs to cover.

Minister, what are you doing to ensure that students who want to go on to post-secondary education can, no matter their ability to pay?

Hon. John Milloy: I'd like to congratulate the member for his advocacy on behalf of the post-secondary institutions in his community and students specifically. I'm pleased to report that through our \$1.5-billion skills-to-jobs action plan announced in last spring's budget, we're providing an additional \$465 million to expand post-secondary student aid and programs. This includes a textbook and technology grant, which will help 550,000 full-time university and college students; it starts at \$150 per student this year, and once fully implemented, it will rise to \$300. In addition, several months ago, the Premier announced that we're providing \$27 million over three years for new distance grants to assist with transportation costs for about 24,000 full-time students from rural and remote areas attending publicly assisted colleges or universities.

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The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you, Minister. Certainly, any initiative that alleviates pressure on students is a welcome one. Research shows that students who come from lower- and middle-income families are less likely to go on to post-secondary education. The same is true for aboriginal students, students whose parents did not attend university or college and students with disabilities. We know these students face unique challenges. We can be even more effective in our goal to reduce poverty by making post-secondary education more accessible.

Minister, can you tell this House what you are doing to ensure that these groups of students have the opportunity to pursue higher education?

Hon. John Milloy: One of the hallmarks of our Reaching Higher plan has been the access strategy for those students who are traditionally under-represented in the post-secondary system. Access grants are available to students from families earning up to \$78,000 a year, and about 53,000 students qualified for an access grant last year. In terms of aboriginal post-secondary education, last year we invested over \$24 million in education and training to provide supports for students and institutions to increase aboriginal participation. We're providing \$30 million over the next three years in initiatives to inform and encourage more first-generation students to pursue higher education; this includes bursaries for students.

I'm also very proud that we are expanding the Pathways to Education program, which works with students at the high school level to encourage them to go on to post-secondary education, and training vulnerable students from poorer areas in the province.

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is for the Premier. On a number of occasions in the course of this question period, the Premier has restated his confidence in the auto sector and talked about the restructuring that's taking place and the challenges within our economy. I agree with him that there are major changes taking place, and I welcomed the Premier's announcement of the Next Generation of Jobs Fund. I believe that there is a role for government to come alongside businesses that are facing challenges.

My question to the Premier is this, however: Given the number of applications that have gone forward to this fund—and I am speaking now on behalf of a specific business within my riding that has made an application. That application has now been in process for nine months and there has not been any money flowing to this company, although they were told they were approved. I'm asking the Premier if he personally would look into this file, which I will provide him, and generally find out what's going on with this fund?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I want to refer this to the Minister of International Trade and Investment.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: The member opposite knows, if we're speaking of the same company, I've had an opportunity more than once to speak to this company that this member opposite has forwarded to my office. We have had good conversations. We've talked about opportunities for this company to make application to our funds. I am not certain to which of the programs this particular company has applied, but would be happy if we could get confirmation of that. We'll certainly look into seeing the status of the applicant to any of the programs through economic development and trade.

Mr. Frank Klees: That's why I'm bringing the issue to the Premier's personal attention. To her credit, the minister did speak with the applicant. We also got significant help from Mr. Kwinter.

I believe that these are issues that we should not be dealing with in a partisan nature. This is a company that needs help. They have now gone through four financial audits. They are being told that they have been approved. What is happening is that they're not seeing the cheque, Premier.

I believe there is a problem internally with how these matters are being handled. I believe it's in your best interest and the best interest of the government and of businesses that are counting on your program to help them. I believe it's in their best interest, Premier, that you personally look into this to find out why these firms that are being told they qualify are not getting the money.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: It's difficult to speak to specifics if we don't know the company and know exactly what fund, but if it is the one that I've called for the member opposite in the past, the member opposite knows how genuine we are in wanting to help this company move forward in manufacturing in what is a very challenging time in Ontario today. We're determined to do that. That is the indication that we gave to this company. We have personally made certain that they knew all of the application process and helped them through it. So if I could get forwarded that information, we can confirm that that is in fact the case, that there is an investment to be made with the Ontario government as a partner potentially. We would be happy to look forward to that.

In fact, this member opposite can be certain that there is no partisanship when it comes to business in Ontario. We want our businesses to grow, and you know full well that we are intent on helping to make that happen.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Is keeping hospitals clean and free of infection part of health care services we can expect from medicare and, if so, where does the Premier rank hospital cleaning in importance? Is it an essential service or ancillary to the provision of hospital services in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let me just speak from the capacity that Ontario families I think would want me to speak. Of course, when we go into a hospital we expect our hospital to be clean. We expect to be able to have our loved ones go there and be treated and come out better. We don't want them to go into a hospital and contract an illness on the basis of an experience they've had within the hospital itself. I think that's a legitimate expectation, and we're going to work as hard as we can to meet that expectation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Health care workers at St. Joseph's hospital in Hamilton have launched a job action over the hospital's plan to privatize cleaning services. These workers and the jobs they do are vital to containing the spread of deadly diseases like C. difficile. Recent reports criticize the McGuinty government and their handling of infection control. Will somebody over

there connect the dots? Allowing privatization and for-profit cleaners is no way to alleviate the public's concern.

Why is the minister allowing St. Joseph's hospital to contract out its cleaning services and potentially put safety at greater risk?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Hospitals have to make their own choices and decisions when it comes to these matters. But where they don't have a choice and when there are no options available to them is when it comes to upholding a high standard of cleanliness, illness prevention and preventing infections from spreading. I think we can all agree on that. As long as we have those standards in place, as long as hospitals are working as hard as they possibly can to ensure that they're reaching for those standards, then I think we're on the right track.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Government Services. Up in Willowdale and indeed throughout the province, we hear a lot of queries from constituents about getting birth certificates, marriage certificates, death certificates and the like. They usually need these for passports, drivers' licences, marriage certificates and pension information. Right now, the office of the registrar deals with this and we fax in copies of their documents and there is a process involved. But Service Ontario is a facility where you can apply online, and if you apply online, there's a 15-day service guarantee. That sounds very good, but can you tell me how that works and how you can possibly give that guarantee?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: That's a good question, and I think I've got a good answer. We were able to live up to a series of service guarantees because we have one of the most modern and efficient systems and best public service delivery systems in the world right here in Ontario. We've made it a priority to serve the people of Ontario.

You know, my mom used to say to me as a kid, "Nobody is perfect," but when it comes to Service Ontario, we're about as close to perfect as you can get: 99.9% of Ontarians who need marriage and death certificates and 99.77% who need birth certificates have those within 15 days.

Service Ontario delivers over 40 million transactions annually, so that's three billion—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.
1140

Mr. David Zimmer: Okay, I understand that part of the answer. But I've got a lot of constituents in Willowdale, and I hear throughout the rest of the province, who are computer illiterate. Seniors who are kind of nervous about dealing with computers, like some of my elderly relatives, people with special needs, people who don't have computers, they can't access the system online. So what are we doing to speed the process up for those people who aren't familiar with the computer online services? How are we going to help them?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Personal services are certainly important to us. All across Ontario, we have 70 Service

Ontario staff locations in which people can get the fast, friendly service they've become accustomed to. There are also 270 private issuers across the province, as well as 400 libraries and service kiosks in various malls. The crown jewel of Service Ontario is right here in Toronto—777 Bay Street—and I invite everybody to come over and look at it. When I was over there last, what impressed me the most was just how clear the directions were for people wanting service. They are there for driver and vehicle registration and other office registrar services. Even Sarah Palin would be happy, because she could get a fishing or a hunting licence there.

Our goal is to roll out more of these all-in-one service centres all across Ontario, as we continue to make it easier and faster to get government—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. New question?

SCHOOL SAFETY

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: To the Minister of Education: It took the death of Jordan Manners to finally prompt you into some degree of action. If you had launched that inquiry that we had requested within a reasonable time frame, law enforcement would have unearthed the assault cover-up of a six-year-old girl, and the police could have held those responsible to account, as they'd planned to do. As the statute of limitations had expired, the police were unable to proceed.

Protocol is not the same as the law. It is offensive to parents that the minister would suggest that reporting student-on-student abuse is a matter of protocol. Mandatory reporting should be the law.

Keeping Ontario's children safe is our priority. Why isn't it yours?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I reject out of hand any implication that somehow school safety and the safety of the precious students who are in our education system are not a top priority for this government. I reject it out of hand.

Since we were elected, we have been putting resources into the system. What that means is more adults in our schools, more teachers, more child and youth workers, more social workers and psychologists—more caring adults to make our system safe. The reality is, when we came into office in 2003, those adults had been stripped out of the system. So what we've been doing is rebuilding that.

The member opposite also knows that the requirements for reporting exist in a number of pieces of legislation. Liz Sandals, who is my parliamentary assistant, is working with the safe schools action team to report—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Actions speak louder than words. There's no excuse for failing to institute mandatory reporting. Our children and our students should not be used as political pawns in your failure to address law and order issues in our schools. It's time to stand up for

our students who cannot stand up for themselves. Minister, when will you finally take the action our children need and deserve and implement mandatory reporting in our schools?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You know, one of the really distinct differences between that party's approach and this government's approach is that we actually talk to people who do the work in the system that we're trying to fix. What we are doing right now is having a very intelligent, in-depth conversation with the sector about how to keep our kids safe: What are the reporting requirements? Where are the gaps? Where are the things that we need to do to keep our kids safe? We have put millions of dollars into more human resources, into cameras for schools. We have changed the legislation to make it more rational. We've been on this since we were elected. What we know is that we need to have that conversation about reporting—that is what my parliamentary assistant is doing—with the experts and with the people in the field who understand education.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Finance. On May 29 of this year, in this House, I asked the minister to investigate the unfair assessment of Ms. Julia Sangster's granny flat. He promised to co-operate and do something. Can the minister update this House on what he has managed to discover over the last four months?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member opposite knows we have been working with his office on that particular file. There's a range of letters and correspondence between us. I will get the answer to the member as quickly as I can. I'm not familiar right at the moment with where that is at. I've been pleased to work with you since you raised the question through correspondence and other ways and conversations between our offices. I will endeavour to get an answer for the member after question period.

Mr. Michael Prue: The minister is correct. I met with two of the minister's staffers on June 11 in my office. They came, we had a big discussion. We exchanged the correspondence that we had. But our office has been waiting for someone, anyone, to get back to us so that we can convey this news to Ms. Sangster.

Four long months have passed. The minister has said today that he wants to do something, but will he do something to rectify the unfair assessment on Ms. Sangster's modest granny flat and for all of those other people who are living in granny flats? We think the regulations are wrong, and we're looking for that kind of commitment as well.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We take all citizens' concerns very seriously. That's why we responded to the Ombudsman's report, every recommendation that gives further protections to citizens, including reverse onus on that. That's why we voted to give seniors a property tax grant which will be coming into effect in the early part of the

new year, which is important to residents throughout the province, particularly seniors.

We take every member's concerns seriously. That's why my staff have been engaged. I will, as I indicated earlier, report back to the member with respect to where that particular situation is.

I look forward to his support of the property tax credit that senior citizens across this province will begin receiving in the early part of next year.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time has ended for question period.

PETITIONS

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Ms. Laurie Scott: This is a petition for fair journeymen tradespeople to apprenticeship ratios.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current journeymen tradespeople to apprenticeship ratios in the manufacturing and construction sectors in Ontario are both outdated and unfair; and

"Whereas the ratio of journeymen tradespeople to apprenticeship in many other jurisdictions in Canada is already one to one; and

"Whereas the current journeymen tradespeople to apprenticeship ratios put small and medium-sized businesses in Ontario requiring skilled trades at a disadvantage to other provinces; and

"Whereas MPP Laurie Scott and MPP Garfield Dunlop have both brought forward notices of motion requesting the government and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to make the necessary regulatory changes to current ratios;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately make the necessary regulatory changes to accommodate the construction and manufacturing trades so that the ratio of journeymen tradespeople to apprentices be one to one."

I hand it to page Timothy.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Joe Dickson: To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Rouge Valley Health board reversed the 2006 announcement closing the maternity and pediatric services at the Ajax-Pickering hospital due to an overwhelming public outcry; and

"Whereas the Rouge Valley Health board of directors has recently approved closing the 20-bed mental health unit at the Ajax-Pickering hospital; and

"Whereas there remains further concern by residents for future maternity/pediatric closings, particularly with the new birthing unit at Centenary hospital, which will see 16 new labour, delivery, recovery and postpartum

(LDRP) birthing rooms and an additional 21 postpartum rooms ...

"Whereas there is a natural boundary, the Rouge Valley, that clearly separates the two distinct areas of Scarborough and Durham region;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Central East Local Health Integration Network (CE-LHIN) and the Rouge Valley Health System (RVHS) board of directors review the Rouge Valley Health System makeup and group Scarborough Centenary hospital with the three other Scarborough hospitals; and

"Further, that we position Ajax-Pickering hospital within Lakeridge Health, thus combining all of our hospitals in Durham region under one Durham region administration."

I will sign this and pass it to Marissa.

1150

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: "Whereas the current Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital is fully utilized; and

"Whereas Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital was sized to serve a town of Oakville population of 130,000, and the current population is now well over 170,000; and

"Whereas the population of Oakville continues to grow as mandated by 'Places to Grow,' an act of the Ontario Legislature, and is projected to be 187,500 in 2012, the completion date for a new facility in the original time frame; and

"Whereas residents of the town of Oakville are entitled to the same quality of health care as all Ontarians; and

"Whereas hospital facilities in the surrounding area do not have capacity to absorb Oakville's overflow needs;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure take the necessary steps to ensure the new Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital be completed under its original timelines without further delay."

I'm very happy to sign this petition and pass it to page Matthew for delivery.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France G  linas: I have a petition prepared by the Ontario Health Coalition and signed by the people of Cornwall.

"Whereas understaffing in Ontario's nursing homes is a serious problem resulting in inadequate care for residents and unsafe conditions for staff;

"Whereas after the Harris government removed the regulations providing minimum care levels in 1995, hours of care dropped below the previous 2.25 hour/day minimum;

"Whereas the recent improvements in hours of care are not adequate, vary widely and are not held to accountable standards;

"Whereas there is currently nothing in legislation to protect residents and staff from renewed cuts to care levels by future governments; and

"Whereas care needs have measurably increased with aging and the movement of people with more complex health needs from hospitals into long-term-care homes;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Immediately enact and fund an average care standard of 3.5 hours per resident per day in the regulations under the new Long-Term Care Homes Act."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it with page Justin.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas crack houses, brothels and other persistent problem properties undermine a neighbourhood by generating public disorder, fear and insecurity; and

"Whereas current solutions—enforcement measures based on current criminal, civil and bylaws—are slow, expensive, cumbersome and not always successful; and

"Whereas safer communities and neighbourhoods (SCAN) legislation is provincial, civil law which counters the negative impact on neighbourhoods of entrenched drug, prostitution or illegal liquor sales based out of homes and businesses and is being successfully utilized in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and the Yukon;...

"Be it resolved that we, the undersigned ... urge the province of Ontario to enact safer communities and neighbourhood (SCAN) legislation in Ontario for the benefit of our neighbourhoods and communities."

I agree with this petition and send it, by way of page Timothy, to the table.

WATER METERING

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the McGuinty government's secret agenda to require the installation of meters on all water wells in the province of Ontario was recently revealed by the medical officer of health for Durham region;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To recognize our concern and dismay with respect to this secret Liberal agenda and encourage all members of the assembly to ensure that this covert initiative does not proceed."

I've signed this.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: "Whereas Milton District Hospital was designed to serve a population of 30,000 and the town of Milton is now home to more than 69,000 people and is still growing rapidly; and

"Whereas the town of Milton is the fastest-growing town in Canada and was forced into that rate of growth by an act of the Ontario Legislature called 'Places to Grow'; and

"Whereas the town of Milton is projected to have a population of 101,600 people in 2014, which is the earliest date an expansion could be completed; and

"Whereas the current Milton facility is too small to accommodate Milton's explosive growth and parts of the hospital prohibit the integration of new outpatient clinics and diagnostic technologies;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure take the necessary steps to ensure timely approval and construction of the expansion to Milton District Hospital."

I've affixed my signature and I pass the petition to Matthew.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today from Janet Hamilton from Mississauga, Ontario.

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I agree with this petition, and I will give it to page Karlie to take to the table.

ANTI-TOBACCO LEGISLATION

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Liberal government recently passed the Smoke-Free Ontario Act; and

"Whereas the act prohibits sale and supply of tobacco to a person who is less than 19 years old; and

"Whereas the Tobacco Tax Act requires that a tobacco tax rate of 11.1 cents applies to every cigarette and on every gram or part gram of tobacco sold in Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that the two acts be enforced on all retailers in Ontario who sell, offer for sale or store tobacco."

I've signed this.

HIGHWAY 17/174

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Highway 17/174 needs to be expanded to four lanes from Trim Road to Prescott-Russell Regional Road 8 in order to enhance road safety; and

"Whereas Highway 17/174 has been known in the past for its accident rate; and

"Whereas this highway represents the main artery for the working population of Clarence-Rockland, Alfred-Plantagenet and Hawkesbury to access the national capital; and....

"Whereas the city of Ottawa passed a council resolution asking that either the province or the united counties of Prescott and Russell take the lead in the environmental assessments; and

"Whereas both the federal and provincial governments have each committed \$40 million towards the widening of Highway 17/174;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to provide the necessary funding to the united counties of Prescott and Russell to undertake the environmental assessments required for the widening of Highway 17/174 from two to four lanes between Trim Road and Prescott-Russell Regional Road 8."

I proudly add my signature to the petition.

HIGHWAY 35

Ms. Laurie Scott: "Highway 35 four-laning.

"Whereas modern highways are economic lifelines to communities across Ontario and crucial to the growth of Ontario's economy; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has been planning the expansion of Highway 35; and

"Whereas Highway 35 provides an important economic link in the overall transportation system—carrying commuter, commercial and high tourist volumes to and from the Kawartha Lakes area and Haliburton;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government move swiftly to complete the four-laning of Highway 35 after the completion of the final public consultation."

We hope that Highway 35 four-laning comes soon.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I thank the people from Credit Valley Hospital who signed the petition, and I would like to ask page Michael to carry it for me.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Pat Hoy: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act has not been updated since 1919;

"Whereas Bill 50 would require all veterinarians to report suspected abuse and neglect, protecting veterinarians from liability;

"Whereas it would allow the OSPCA to inspect and investigate places where animals are kept;

"Whereas the bill would prohibit the training of animals to fight;

"Whereas Bill 50 would allow the OSPCA to inspect roadside zoos;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 50, entitled the Provincial Animal Welfare Act, 2008, to protect our animal friends."

And I have signed the petition.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition from people right here in the heart of Toronto, on Bayview Avenue, who are in support of Bill 56.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas innocent people are being victimized by the growing number of unlawful firearms in our communities; and

"Whereas police officers, military personnel and lawfully licensed persons are the only people allowed to possess firearms; and

"Whereas a growing number of unlawful firearms are transported, smuggled and found in motor vehicles; and

"Whereas impounding motor vehicles and suspending driver's licences of persons possessing unlawful firearms in motor vehicles would aid the police in their efforts to make our streets safer;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 56, entitled the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act, 2008, into law, so that we can reduce the number of crimes involving firearms in our communities."

I fully support the people in the Bayview area in Toronto, and I affix my name to the petition.

GUN CONTROL

Mr. Bob Delaney: I would like to, on behalf of the member for Scarborough Southwest, read this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas access to guns is a major cause behind an increase in violent crime;

"Whereas such crime has been steadily increasing over a number of years;

"Whereas current preventative initiatives have been put in place to stem the tide of violent crime, but a direct approach targeting gun usage has not been undertaken;

"Whereas signs specifically stating a zero tolerance attitude toward gun usage in the commission of gun violence needs to be created and erected to demonstrate our collective disdain for this type of activity;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Public Safety to implement an initiative to construct a zero tolerance gun usage sign and have these signs placed on all province of Ontario property, such as major roads and buildings."

Speaker, I'm pleased to sign this petition and to ask page Matthew to carry it for me.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for petitions has ended.

This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1203 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

KEN DANBY

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I rise today to mark the passing of a great Canadian artist, Ken Danby. If I may quote from Danby's website:

One year ago, "On the autumn afternoon of September 23, Ken Danby, accompanied by his wife Gillian and" two "friends, paddled a canoe across North Tea Lake in Algonquin Park.... The weather was glorious and the trees glowed with brilliant colour. Laughter echoed across the lake. As the group was about to retire for the day, Ken suddenly collapsed and died immediately....

"The world lost a great talent that afternoon; an artist in every sense of the word We will miss his eloquence, his humour, his leadership, his affection, his artistic vision. We will miss the paintings he did not get to paint, but will continue to admire and enjoy the legacy of paintings he left behind."

I had the pleasure of attending the official opening of the Headwaters Arts Festival this past weekend where a selection of Ken's work is being featured at a special exhibit and where Ken's wife, Gillian, spoke about Ken's influence in Canadian art. As Robert Bateman said that evening, Ken Danby made it possible for other artists to create and thrive in Canada as full-time artists. I know that Ken's legacy will continue to encourage other artists to create art for all of us to enjoy and remind us how the arts, in its many different forms, benefits our communities and our lives.

TONY STACEY CENTRE FOR VETERANS CARE

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I rise in the House today to commend the Tony Stacey Centre for Veterans Care, in the Highland Creek area of Scarborough, for the excellent care and dignified comfort they provide for men and women in their golden years. The centre is operated by the Royal Canadian Legion and is home to veterans, their spouses and Silver Cross mothers. The Tony Stacey Centre opened in 1979 and grew from the generous hearts and minds of veterans, and since that time, it has faithfully provided the highest quality of long-term care for our veterans, their families and the community. It is distinguished by the fact that it is the only veterans' long-term-care facility that accepts non-serving spouses of veterans and allows spouses to be together and not separated simply by virtue of illness.

Just recently, I had the privilege to attend the 31st annual ceremony commemorating the 68th anniversary of the Battle of Britain at the centre, and I was reminded of those who went off to war in distant lands to fight for the rights and freedoms we hold so dearly to this day. The event, which included a parade by veterans from Branch 258 of the Royal Canadian Legion, was viewed by young and old, as the Highland Creek community truly came together to show its support for our veterans.

The Tony Stacey Centre has led the way in establishing best practices for the aged, and throughout the years has continued to be a community leader not only in Highland Creek, but also throughout my riding and beyond. We are fortunate to have dedicated workers and volunteers who work tirelessly to ensure that our veterans and their families receive the best possible care, and with

facilities like the Tony Stacey Centre, we all benefit. Visitors are always welcomed at the centre to discover for themselves the great work that is being done there, to talk to the residents of the facility and to discover the pride they have for this centre and for our great country.

VIVA STRIKE

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to draw attention to a situation affecting thousands of York region residents that seemingly has gone unnoticed and largely ignored by the McGuinty government. The Viva strike is now into its sixth day, leaving more than 35,000 commuters without public transit that they count on to connect them to their jobs, schools and many other important activities and services.

Yesterday, the Minister of Labour revealed that a provincial mediator will begin talks with Viva drivers and management starting tomorrow. This passive approach by the McGuinty government is in stark contrast to the TTC strike in April, when the Liberal government stepped in after just two days to pass back-to-work legislation.

Yesterday, the labour minister commented that the TTC strike warranted such immediate intervention due to extraordinary circumstances. Well, according to him, the same suffering that York region residents will have endured for a full week before his mediator begins talks with Viva, and without any definite timeline in sight for an end to this strike, somehow becomes transformed into a set of extraordinary circumstances when one crosses the municipal boundary of Toronto.

I want to impress on the Premier and his labour minister that commuters in York region deserve no less consideration than TTC commuters, and I call on them to send a clear message that this strike must end and it must end now.

ANTHONY LOCILENTO PARK

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I rise today to bring attention to an event I attended on the weekend honouring a young man whose life ended before it should have. On Sunday, September 28, I attended the official renaming of Blue Coin Park for Anthony Locilento Park.

Anthony Locilento, son of Angelo and Grace Locilento, was tragically killed in a snowmobiling accident when he was only 37 years old. He was engaged to be married when he succumbed to the injuries of his accident.

I draw attention to this because the Canadian Institute for Health Information has found snowmobiling to be the number one cause of winter sports and recreation-related injuries, with young people most at risk. Every season, between 30 and 40 people are killed and more than 300 are injured snowmobiling in Ontario, according to the Ministry of Transportation.

Those of us who gathered to commemorate Anthony were moved that the renaming of the park will help to

maintain a bond between a family who continues to grieve the loss of a loved one and the respect and care with which we must interact with nature.

As we head into a new season, let us remember to do all we can to prevent accidents so that we can enjoy winter activities safely.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Norm Miller: Starting this week, the daily Ontario Northland bus departing from Sudbury at 5:15 and the bus departing from Toronto at 10 a.m., both servicing the Parry Sound area through Highway 69, will no longer be available. Further north, communities between Hearst and Timmins will also see the loss of two daily buses, one southbound and one northbound.

Glenndon Lockhart, a Parry Sound resident, writes, "Our daughter, who works in Toronto uses the Friday night bus to come home. She has no other options as rail service for passengers is virtually non-existent and she doesn't own a car. Many of her friends use this bus as they are in the same situation. I have noticed ... that this bus is usually busy, so I am confused as to why Ontario Northland plans to cancel a bus that should be profitable." Under the revised schedule, Mr. Lockhart's daughter will get into Parry Sound at 3 a.m. Saturday morning.

Mr. Lockhart is not the only one concerned by cuts to the service. Parry Sound town council says that many residents rely on the Northland service as their primary means of travelling south to Toronto and the surrounding area for family and medical needs. They go on to say, "There must be recognition of the essential nature of the service to northern communities where transportation options are extremely limited."

It is shameful that the McGuinty government, which is responsible for the Ontario Northland, stands idly by while northerners are left stranded. What happened to this government's northern growth plan?

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Peter Kormos: Down where I come from, in Niagara, folks worked real hard for a long time building public health care and building the hospitals in which that health care is delivered: small-town hospitals, like Fort Erie and Port Colborne and, yes, Welland and St. Catharines and Niagara Falls. Now we've got an unelected, undemocratic Niagara Health System board.

Mike Harris and the Tories forced the merger of hospitals on us and the creation of the Niagara Health System; Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals forced the mega-LHINs on us. So these unelected bodies, with no mandate whatsoever from the public, from the taxpayer or from the recipients of health care, make decisions to shut down emergency rooms in Port Colborne and Fort Erie. I tell you, it's not going to fly.

They made decisions to shut down maternity wards in Fort Erie, Welland and Port Colborne. There are going to be more babies born on the side of the road on the way

from Fort Erie to St. Catharines, if that happens, on a January night than you ever, ever dreamed of.

The people of Niagara aren't taking it. They know that these are undemocratic boards that make their behind-closed-doors secret decisions—no accountability. Well, we're holding them accountable. It's not acceptable that hospitals in small-town Ontario don't provide core hospital services like emergency rooms, maternity and psychiatric services.

This Sunday, October 5, there will be a rally at 2 o'clock at H.H. Knoll Lakeview Park in Port Colborne, where there are going to be thousands of folks saying, "Hell, no" to the Niagara Health System and its back-room buddies. I'll be joining them with great pleasure and passion.

1510

ATIKOKAN GENERATING STATION

Mr. Bill Mauro: Since 2004, I've been working to keep the Atikokan generating station open. As you may recall, since going into the 2003 provincial election all three parties and all three party leaders were publicly on record supporting the elimination of coal-fired electricity generation in the province of Ontario. I was very encouraged when the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, George Smitherman, expressed confidence, in a late-August tour, when he said that a long-term future was possible for the AGS.

I was there when the minister visited the station and met with OPG officials to discuss issues related to the plant and the potential for biomass use in this facility. The minister saw for himself the work OPG, the community and the research station are doing to potentially convert this plant to biomass. The preliminary indications are very encouraging. The test burn conducted by OPG at the plant has shown very promising results. Researchers have been testing increasing concentrations of wood pellets as a firing fuel and last month successfully tested a 100% wood pellet burn. These preliminary tests have demonstrated that the boiler at the 230-megawatt plant can be effective when fired by wood pellets.

More work and research have to be done for this preliminary success to be converted into a long-term future. We will work to determine that enough biomass exists not only to potentially support the AGS but also those private sector entities that will be requiring this energy stream to support their operations.

I will continue to work with Minister Smitherman to ensure that the AGS be given every opportunity to continue its vital operations. Using biomass, which is both carbon neutral and a practical way to help prevent climate change, has the promise to create a new generation of green-collar careers and industry while providing clean, renewable energy to our community.

MASAI FOR AFRICA CAMPAIGN

Mrs. Liz Sandals: This weekend I am attending an event in Guelph celebrating the Masai for Africa cam-

paign. The campaign was launched in 2006 with the goal of raising \$1 million by 2010 to assist the Tsepong Clinic in Lesotho, Africa, to provide crucial medical services for more than 6,000 patients with HIV and AIDS.

Masai for Africa was spearheaded by Dr. Anne-Marie Zajdlik, founder of Guelph's Masai HIV/AIDS clinic. The project is a partnership between the Masai Centre, Stephen Lewis, the Ontario Hospital Association and Ontario Hospitals for Africa.

The challenge to help Lesotho was accepted enthusiastically by the people of Guelph, particularly by the University of Guelph community. Just two years ago, U of G students initiated their Bracelet of Hope campaign, selling red and white bracelets produced by a rural women's co-op in South Africa. They have sold more than 115,000 bracelets, raising more than \$575,000, surpassing their goal of \$100,000.

I'm tremendously proud of the support that Dr. Zajdlik and the Masai for Africa campaign have received from the people of Guelph. More than one year ahead of schedule, we're celebrating that the \$1-million goal has been met.

But Guelphites realize there is more to be done to help the people of Lesotho. We'll be issuing a challenge to Waterloo region and Woodstock. I know that the dedicated people who are supporting Masai for Africa will reach whatever goal they set.

DRAPEAU FRANCO-ONTARIEN

M. Phil McNeely: J'appuie entièrement les propos de la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones, l'honorable M^{me} Meilleur, lorsqu'il s'agit de défendre le drapeau franco-ontarien. Suite à l'allocation de M^{me} Meilleur le jour du 33^e anniversaire du drapeau, le député conservateur de Thornhill, qui est d'ailleurs le critique de son caucus pour les affaires francophones, a cru approprié de déclarer que le drapeau franco-ontarien était inutile. Un tel commentaire démontre son manque de connaissance de la réalité francophone en Ontario et de l'apport fondamental de la communauté francophone à l'histoire de notre province.

J'ai reçu de nombreux messages de la part de mes commettants indignés par les propos du député de Thornhill. Je suis moi-même fier de mes racines françaises. L'attaque du député conservateur était d'autant plus choquante qu'elle a été applaudie par les autres membres de son caucus et qu'aucune excuse n'a été faite jusqu'à date.

Je tiens solennellement aujourd'hui à renouveler mon soutien et celui de mes amis libéraux de tous les francophones de l'Ontario qui ont été blessés par les commentaires du député de Thornhill.

Nous attendons toujours des excuses.

SPECIAL REPORT, OMBUDSMAN

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table the report of the

Ombudsman of Ontario entitled Oversight Unseen: Investigation into the Special Investigations Unit's Operational Effectiveness and Credibility.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the September 30, 2008, report of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 107(f)9, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PORCUPINE GOLDOR MINES LIMITED ACT, 2008

Mr. Zimmer moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr12, An Act to revive Porcupine Goldtop Mines Limited and to change its name to Porcupine Goldor Mines Limited.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 85, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

WASTE REPORTING ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LES RENSEIGNEMENTS À FOURNIR CONCERNANT LES DÉCHETS

Mr. Sousa moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 105, An Act respecting the reporting of industrial, commercial and institutional waste to facilitate the establishment of waste reduction targets and to promote recycling/ Projet de loi 105, Loi traitant des renseignements à fournir sur les déchets industriels, commerciaux et institutionnels afin de faciliter l'établissement d'objectifs en matière de réduction des déchets et de favoriser le recyclage.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Charles Sousa: I am pleased to present the Waste Reporting Act, 2008, which requires the monitoring and reporting of IC&I waste in Ontario. Currently, institutional, commercial and industrial waste is not being sufficiently recycled. Many small businesses that contract recycling removal would be surprised to know that

recyclables are often going directly to landfills. There's no system in place to monitor the current environment.

My bill will track the movement of waste and facilitate the creation of appropriate diversion targets. This will help protect our environment and grow the recycling industry in Ontario.

DEFERRED VOTES

SERVICES AND SUPPORTS TO PROMOTE THE SOCIAL INCLUSION OF PERSONS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LES SERVICES ET SOUTIENS FAVORISANT L'INCLUSION SOCIALE DES PERSONNES AYANT UNE DÉFICIENCE INTELLECTUELLE

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 77. Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1518 to 1523.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Best, Margaret
Brotten, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chan, Michael
Colle, Mike
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Duncan, Dwight
Gravelle, Michael

Hoy, Pat
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kular, Kuldip
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Mauro, Bill
McGuinty, Dalton
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Mitchell, Carol
Moridi, Reza
Naqvi, Yasir
Oraziotti, David
Pendergast, Leeanna

Pupatello, Sandra
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Smith, Monique
Sousa, Charles
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those opposed will rise one at a time.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Bisson, Gilles
Elliott, Christine
Gélinas, France
Hardeman, Ernie

Hillier, Randy
Horwath, Andrea
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Kormos, Peter
Marchese, Rosario

Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Prue, Michael

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 43; the nays are 17.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion passed.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

COLLEGES COLLECTIVE
BARGAINING ACT, 2008LOI DE 2008 SUR LA NÉGOCIATION
COLLECTIVE DANS LES COLLÈGES

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 29, 2008, on the motion for third reading of Bill 90, An Act to enact the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act, 2008, to repeal the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act and to make related amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 90, Loi édictant la Loi de 2008 sur la négociation collective dans les collèges, abrogeant la Loi sur la négociation collective dans les collèges et apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my pleasure to get up and make a few remarks about Bill 90. I had the pleasure of hearing some of the debate yesterday afternoon. My understanding is that the bill is something we will be supporting, but we regret that it wasn't the best possible bill it could be.

I believe that it was very clearly put on the record by our critic, the member for Trinity-Spadina, that there were opportunities to make this bill quite a bit better than what we have before us. In fact, not only did we bring some 16 amendments that we thought would help improve the bill, but in particular, OPSEU, the union that will be representing these workers at the college level, also provided some very good suggestions to the government in terms of how to improve the bill.

It's interesting, because in the process of that debate it was quite clear that there have been missed opportunities over the past 20-odd years, and maybe even a little bit longer, to have corrected the problem that this bill is now correcting. So I think it's important to acknowledge that that correction needs to happen.

What this bill basically does, of course, is provide the opportunity for part-time workers at the college level to collectively bargain, to be able to be represented by a union, which is a basic, fundamental right that not all, but many, many other workers in the province of Ontario have.

So in fact it has been very, very wrong, over the last couple of decades, that these particular workers—part-time academic workers or instructors as well as part-time support staff—have been prevented, have not been allowed, under the previous legislation, to organize into unions and bargain collectively for their rights and benefits at work. What Bill 90 does is correct that wrong.

But one of the wrongs it does not correct—and this is something that unfortunately will remain the same in the province of Ontario—is the significant underfunding of the college system, of post-secondary altogether, in the province of Ontario.

There is a significant problem when we have a province of the size and wealth that we have, and we often

hear our Premier talking about how this province is one that drives the economy of the entire country and about how the economy will be transforming, and yet the government does not invest the way it should in post-secondary education. In fact, Ontario is 10th in Canada in its investment per capita in the post-secondary system.

1530

So, yes, this bill is important because it provides the basic right of workers to join a union and bargain collectively, but what it doesn't do is fix the long-standing problem in this province of underfunding of the college system.

What could have been done, other than a huge investment in post-secondary in the province, within the context of this bill? It's interesting. I raise that issue because some of the pieces that we think should be in that bill are pieces that I think most people would say are reasonable, but the reason that they weren't implemented is for that very problem—that very problem will become exacerbated if in fact these clauses are put in.

It's very clear that there's no commitment on the government side to actually bump up the funding of post-secondary, particularly colleges, because we see in the kind of amendments that were suggested but not implemented that these things would be cost matters that, of course, the government is not prepared to invest in.

What kinds of pieces are there that we think could have improved the bill? One very, very fundamental one is first-contract arbitration. That's a system that we think is important. We think it would help to make sure that a collective agreement is reached. If either party were desirous of having an arbitrator come in and settle a first contract, if that settlement cannot happen through negotiation and bargaining of the parties, then either party would be able to ask for arbitration of the first collective agreement. That basically would help to ensure that a collective agreement is put in place, one where an arbitrator would be able to determine which outstanding issues are a matter of resolve. So the arbitrator comes to the table and says, "Well, here is what this side wants and here is what that side wants," and the arbitrator decides what's reasonable in the context of having the first collective agreement signed. Unfortunately, although we put that amendment and although OPSEU suggested that the amendment be in, the government did not see the importance of putting into this bill the opportunity for first-contract arbitration.

Another thing that wasn't included is the issue of what's called "deemed strike." I'm going to refer a little bit to the OPSEU document that I received because it describes very well what the deemed strike or lockout provision is. Currently, in the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act, there is a deemed strike or lockout provision. That provision is called the "anti-scab provision," in other terms. It ensures that when any workers in a bargaining unit are on strike or locked out, all are deemed to be on strike or locked out. What this really does is it creates an important environment where the 180,000 students who are on college campuses are kept safe, so

that there's not this anxiety about picket lines that can be very, very difficult for people and for students, in terms of their safety.

The former Conservative government didn't even go as far as to get rid of this deemed strike or lockout provision, but for some reason this Liberal government here in Ontario thinks that it's all right to get rid of a provision that is one that should have been maintained in this bill, and I really fear for the result of that over the next several years. I guess we're going to have to wait and see what that is going to mean in practice, to have that provision removed. It seems to me that the government has made a significant error in not continuing on with the deemed strike or lockout provision. Unfortunately, the bill is flawed as a result. It's hard to understand why the government doesn't see the value of having that provision. It's hard to understand why the government doesn't see that there was a reason for that language to have been there for all of these years and how they can so easily remove it with the passing of Bill 90. I think that they will see, in time, that that was an error, that that was a mistake, and that they should have heeded the advice of OPSEU and of the New Democratic Party here in Ontario and left that provision in Bill 90.

There are a couple of other pieces to the bill that we thought should have been there. One of them is an issue around what happens or what could have been included in the bill to make sure that the school year is not jeopardized if there is a dispute. What this bill doesn't do is carry on the practice of making sure that the negotiations follow a certain timetable and a certain schedule, and also certain notice periods to make sure that the process of collective bargaining does not end up jeopardizing the school year.

I think this is also a mistake that the government has made. Again, these are recommendations that came from OPSEU. We recommended some of these amendments ourselves as well during the committee phase of the bill. Unfortunately, the government didn't see fit to include them in the final bill. We're going to be in a situation where we'll possibly have jeopardizing of school years for students, and I don't think that's in anybody's interest. I think it's actually quite a serious problem, and one that could have easily been resolved if the government had taken the time to make sure that those very important pieces were maintained in the bill.

Another piece that's not included here that should be included is that the way the government decided to move forward in providing these opportunities for collective bargaining for these new groups of employees—in fact, these are not new groups at all. These are employees that have really, frankly, been exploited by the system for decades on end now—yes, under many governments, not just under this government and not just under the last government but even under the government before that. I'm free to admit it; I'm admitting that's the case. What's happened is, these workers, because they have not had the chance to bargain collectively and they have not been treated on an equal footing, have been basically paid and

provided with benefits that are less than their counterparts in the system. So instead of using this bill to bring everybody together—all of the part-time workers and all of the full-time workers in two separate bargaining units which exist already, instructional full-time and support staff full-time—instead of bringing the instructional part-time in with the instructional full-time and the support staff part-time in with the support staff full-time, what they've done is decided to create two new bargaining units. Now there are not only two bargaining units, there will be four bargaining units. You have to scratch your head and think, "Well, why would you do that?" It's kind of making things more complicated than they need to be. But it doesn't take long to figure out the wily government and its desire to use the tactic of divide and conquer.

Because, of course, if you have a larger bargaining unit with more workers in it, they gain strength. There's strength in numbers. It's an old adage but it's a true one. So if we keep these instructional workers separated from each other, with fewer opportunities to have common cause, then of course it's easier to divide them from each other and create conflict between themselves; whereas if they're one bargaining unit, it will be a lot easier for them to bargain for the voice of all as opposed to having, perhaps, issues amongst themselves. That's not to say that they do, but you can see how management and how the government would prefer to have a weakened voice, if you will, rather than a stronger voice. This is not a good thing for the workers, but I guess it's a good thing, from the government's perspective, to create division and dissent.

I've got to tell you, I for one am pretty sick and tired of the politics of division in the province of Ontario. They have been reigning here for very, very long—many, many years—and unfortunately this Liberal government seems to be quite in line with that same kind of methodology. The government before the Liberals were in power, the Harris government—that's what made them famous, the divide-and-conquer tactic and the idea that you just have to divide people off, create conflict and turn people against each other, and then you can come in and govern effectively because everybody else is fighting amongst themselves. I fear that the government is using the same kind of perspective when they say that it's best to have four bargaining units instead of simply two bargaining units. I think it's a callous tactic, and one that does not bode well for a positive future in terms of the ongoing bargaining that's going to take place in the college system.

1540

Having said that, the fact of the matter is that the bill is long overdue. It's something that the college sector has been working on, particularly the workers. OPSEU, the union representing these workers, has been trying to have this issue addressed for a very long time. If you want to look at it in monetary terms, I'm sure hundreds of millions of dollars have been saved over the years on the backs of the workers who have not had the opportunity to be part of the union. Many of the workers there are

working full-time hours and have been working full-time hours—some of them probably for their entire career as an employee of a college—but being paid at part-time wages and benefits. So you can see how over the years these workers have been significantly exploited. I would expect and hope that everybody in the chamber would support taking these workers out of the dark ages, really, and taking them out of an untenable situation that they've been dealing with for all these years.

The big tragedy, though, is that the bill leaves a lot to be desired in terms of the details. If people are particularly interested in this issue, it's very easy to go through the Hansards, particularly of the committee work that was done, and look at some of the arguments and recommendations that were brought forward. I've highlighted four of them very briefly in the small amount of time that I've had, but there are others that are significant as well.

The issue around first-contract arbitration is a really big one, which we think this government should have included. It's an extremely important piece. We think that the union—OPSEU—was right in suggesting that first-contract arbitration be allowed and be enshrined in the legislation. Unfortunately, the government didn't agree, so first-contract arbitration is not in the bill.

The deeming of strikes and lockouts, again, an issue that was raised by the union: Of course we, meaning the New Democratic Party, brought forward amendments to the bill to include this. Our critic, Rosario Marchese from the Trinity-Spadina riding, brought those issues forward, brought the issue of deemed strike or lockout to the table, and the government, in its wisdom or lack thereof, determined that they did not want to have that provision in this legislation. That's unfortunate; that's extremely unfortunate.

Another issue that we are concerned wasn't included in the bill, again, is the issue of the extent to which the jeopardization of the school year is now much more likely, because the provisions of the previous legislation provided for an environment where everything could be done to make sure that young people were not in jeopardy of losing a school year as a result of collective bargaining processes that might be leading towards an eventual strike or lockout. This is something that was a very responsible scenario, a very responsible way of dealing with the situation. But, unfortunately, the government didn't see fit to put that in the legislation either.

Again, I'm fearful that these things are—they seem like minor issues when you just talk about them here on a Tuesday afternoon in the Legislature, but as we go through the next couple of years and see how this legislation becomes enacted in real life, I think the government will have some regrets around not taking the good advice of OPSEU and the New Democratic caucus, particularly our critic, who put these things forward.

Finally, the whole issue that I spent a little bit of time on, around insisting there be four bargaining units instead of only two bargaining units: Again, this is the issue of divide and conquer, of creating a scenario where, instead

of having everybody who is an instructor, part-time and full-time, in one bargaining unit, or an academic, if you want to use that language—a teacher, all of those part-time and full-time people—in one bargaining unit, there's going to be a full-time bargaining unit, a part-time bargaining unit. Similarly, all of the people who are support staff, who are full-time and part-time, instead of being in one bargaining unit—again, that's going to be cut into two bargaining units, the purpose of which is pretty blatant, and that is to just reduce the collectivity, the collective voice, the strength of that collective voice, that those larger bargaining units would have.

I think that is a really inappropriate thing to do, that there is an obvious community of interest between instructors, whether they are full-time or part-time, and support staff, whether they are full-time or part-time. I think the government has purposely tried to weaken the bargaining units by dividing them into four separate pieces, as opposed to the two which were already in place: instructional and support staff.

I know that yesterday afternoon a number of members got up and extolled the virtues of their own community colleges, so I would be remiss if I didn't put on the record the fabulous work that gets done at Mohawk College in Hamilton. It is in my riding. It is a fabulous institution, and they have recently expanded to do a more skills training type of instruction and work in our community, which is great. I only hope that when people graduate from those courses there are actually jobs for them, because we know that these days we are losing jobs faster than you can shake a stick at, particularly in Hamilton, where we are extremely hard hit by the manufacturing job losses that have plagued this province and that this government has done very little to nothing to address.

Having said that, our community college is an excellent resource. It is well utilized. We have great instructors there. The students are an excellent piece of our community. As we move forward through this bill, I hope the way the government has decided to go does not weaken our college system but strengthens it. I only hope that the government gets back to a position where it is funding so that we are not number 10 in the country in terms of funding for post-secondary.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'd like to commend the member from Hamilton Centre on her analysis of the bill. I guess this is one of these situations where the government could have done the right thing and had everybody onside. In this case, they've sort of done a half measure. The bill does some things, obviously, that the workers are in favour of, and that is a good thing. But where it falls is that it's really short in a couple of key elements.

There's one I wanted to speak to earlier, because the member raises the issue of successor rights. We know that more and more we're seeing work being contracted out in public institutions. In my view, if the government doesn't allow for successor rights and related employer

provisions to be enacted within the bill, which it has not, this is really going to be an incentive on the part of some community colleges to have some of their courses hived off to others to be delivered, and, if it's a successor employer and there are no successor rights, lose that right you have as an individual to be part of the bargaining unit and having to start all over again. It's a provision that has been around for a long time. People may know the Shebandowan mine, north of Thunder Bay. That was under the Steelworkers some years ago. It closed down the first time, I guess, for about six, seven or eight years. Then, when it was reopened under a new employer, there was an attempt on the part of the new employer not to recognize the union. But the Ontario Labour Relations Act was very clear: Just because the mine had been sold, that did not give the right of the new employer not to recognize the collective agreement that was at that mine property.

Certainly, if you see that within the private sector in order to get around successor rights, there are going to be the same kinds of pressures within the public sector. I would say that we see these days, under this government and the federal government, more services going to the private sector than we've ever seen before. So I think the government's not putting successor rights and employer provisions inside this legislation is telling about where it really is with contracting out.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

The member for Hamilton Centre has two minutes to reply if she chooses to do so.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I appreciate the comments from the member for Timmins-James Bay. Of course, one of the issues he was referring to is another of the 16 amendments that the NDP tabled during the clause-by-clause process of the bill; again another one that the government, in my recollection, did not put into place. Here we have a situation where there are a number of amendments that could have been included in the bill that would have made for a much better piece of legislation.

1550

I know, as we've watched so many times in this Legislature, the Liberals are okay with not good enough or they're okay with just making it, getting by with the minimal amount of change and not really rising to the challenge of putting really good and solid legislation in place. So I would expect the people around here are going to support the bill with all of its foibles and flaws because it is better than what we had. We had a situation where these workers didn't have the right to bargain in Ontario and haven't for many years and have been exploited as a result; again, not the colleges' fault but more the government's fault because of lack of resourcing and funding of the sector.

Having said that, it's unfortunate that a bill that has the opportunity to be so much better once again has been low-balled, if you will, by the Liberals. They are not prepared to put the finishing touches on that would make the bill really strong and really effective, and instead they are happy with second-best. And you know what? They

are the government, so I guess if they are happy with second-best and it's a bill that we are glad that at least they are moving a little bit on, then we will probably support the bill. But it is unfortunate that they didn't take the opportunity to do the right thing by these workers and to put a really strong bill in place, and I fear that they are going to see the results of that in a negative way over the years.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I am delighted to have the opportunity this afternoon to rise and speak in support of Bill 90, the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act. Bill 90 would extend collective bargaining rights to part-time faculty and support staff at Ontario's colleges of applied art and technology and modernize college collective bargaining. This is an area that I have been quite interested in over the years, because of course I've done a lot of collective bargaining in the elementary and secondary and university sectors, or at least been involved in labour in the university sector, so I have been quite involved in this. I was very surprised to learn that part-time teachers, part-time staff didn't have the right to do collective bargaining as they do in those other education sectors—to me, that seemed an automatic. I am very pleased that we do have Bill 90, which is going to extend the rights of collective bargaining to those people and also, I might add, fix up a number of other anomalies in that legislation and bring it more in line with the Labour Relations Act. I am quite pleased that we do have this act and I will be supporting it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? Are there any other honourable members who wish to participate in this debate? If not, the member for Richmond Hill has the right of final reply, if he chooses to do so.

Mr. Moridi has moved third reading of Bill 90, An Act to enact the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act, 2008, to repeal the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act and to make related amendments to other Acts. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members for a 30-minute bell.

I wish to inform the House that I have received a request for a deferral from the chief government whip, and as such, the vote will be deferred until Wednesday, October 1, at the time of deferred votes.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Orders of the day. I recognize the Minister of Tourism.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Ms. Smith has moved the adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1555.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Broten, Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
		Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
		Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture
		Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglington–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
		Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
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Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
		Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
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Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
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O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	

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Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London—Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	
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		Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
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First Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)



Wednesday 1 October 2008

Mercredi 1^{er} octobre 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
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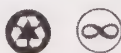
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 1 October 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 1^{er} octobre 2008

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask members to join me in the recitation of the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Sikh prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR DES IDÉES D'AVENIR

Mr. Duncan moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 100, An Act to amend the Corporations Tax Act and the Taxation Act, 2007 / Projet de loi 100, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'imposition des sociétés et la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate? Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time this morning with my parliamentary assistant, Wayne Arthurs, the member for Pickering-Scarborough East.

I'd like to talk about this important piece of legislation which I introduced last week. Bill 100, Ideas for the Future Act, 2008, is designed to attract individuals with great ideas from all across Canada to set up their businesses in Ontario. What we're talking about here is turning innovation into Ontario jobs by establishing high-tech companies that will in turn provide a boost to the economy. This bill, if passed, would provide a 10-year corporate income tax exemption for new companies that turn home-grown ideas into Ontario jobs and products.

We have the support of post-secondary institutions. The president and CEO of Colleges Ontario, Linda Franklin, claims that half of the jobs in the next 15 years will require the ability to use technology that has not yet been invented. Ms. Franklin supports this measure, which would promote applied research and innovation across Ontario's 24 colleges.

The Ontario government is helping workers and families across the province as well. We are helping businesses and communities. We are helping to make the transition to a new period of economic growth.

With this bill, the McGuinty government is helping to turn ideas into high-tech jobs. What we are trying to do is encourage Ontario's entrepreneurs to commercialize public research in these leading areas. This is a landmark

corporate tax measure and is the first of its kind in Canada. It provides a strong incentive for firms to take ideas and turn them into real commercial products. We are supporting innovative businesses in commercializing research at post-secondary schools and research institutes. New businesses in Ontario that commercialize eligible intellectual property developed at qualifying Canadian colleges, universities and research institutes would be eligible to claim this 10-year corporate income tax refund if this bill is passed.

This legislation supports Ontario's ambitious innovation agenda. Our 2008 budget promotes a culture of innovation and builds on the government's innovation agenda through almost \$300 million in new investments and proposed tax initiatives that support the start-up and growth of innovative firms. Right now, somewhere in a lab in Waterloo or Ottawa or any number of places—Leamington—Ontarians are helping to invent our future. They are discovering cleaner ways to generate power. We certainly see that, Mr. Speaker, in the greenhouses in your neck of the woods. They are discovering new ways to treat disease. They are developing new technologies for empowering businesses and connecting communities. From the discovery of insulin to the BlackBerry, the phenomenal impact of Ontario inventions has spread around the world.

Our economic and social prosperity is dependent on this ability to be innovative and to compete. We are investing in an aggressive innovation agenda to ensure that we are one of the winning economies in the 21st century. This agenda builds on the strengths of Ontario's creative environment, our diverse culture, our highly skilled workforce, our world-class education system and our internationally recognized research community. It builds on this province's greatest strength. That strength is the talent and ingenuity of our people. Ontario is truly a home to innovation and a destination for success. For example, last week the Premier was at the Honda engine plant opening in Alliston. Honda opened this new plant to make fuel-efficient engines. The Premier thanked Honda for its continued confidence in Ontario's highly skilled workforce.

Our innovation agenda is aimed at igniting growth in the industries that will shape our future and create Ontario's next generation of jobs and prosperity. With this bill, eligible intellectual property would include patented property and copyrighted computer programs that constitute a technological advancement. Commercialized ideas will create jobs for Ontario's future. This bill, if passed, would encourage Ontario entrepreneurs to com-

mercialize public research in areas like bio-economy, clean technologies, advanced health technologies, and telecommunications, computer and digital technologies. These are important sectors of the economy we must succeed in if we want Ontario to be a global leader. They are the keystones of a new evolving economy. This bill, if passed, would allow a start-up company to take new ideas developed at Canadian public research institutes to market and enable more highly-skilled people to work in a more robust and productive economy.

In an increasingly global market, we are helping to launch the next wave of Ontario's innovators. This new and exciting program is aimed at encouraging economic growth, new energy development and assisting the environment. We are doing this by reforming the tax system through this bill—if passed—to promote leadership in investment and economic growth in the province.

The McGuinty government believes that our colleges, universities and research institutes provide a wealth of knowledge to be tapped to capitalize on innovation. I would like to talk about some of the key programs and tax incentives we have in place that are designed to encourage innovation in Ontario. The Ontario innovation tax credit allows small and medium-sized Ontario corporations to claim a 10% refundable tax credit on qualifying research and development expenditures in Ontario. The Ontario research and development tax credit for taxation years ending after 2008 allows corporations to claim a 4.5% non-refundable tax credit on qualifying research and development expenditures in Ontario. The Ontario business research institute tax credit is for Ontario corporations to claim a 20% refundable tax credit for qualifying research and development expenditures incurred in Ontario as part of an eligible research contract with an eligible Ontario research institute. The innovation demonstration fund provides financial support of up to 50% of eligible costs to help Ontario companies with the commercialization and initial demonstration of their innovative technologies.

0910

Our Next Generation of Jobs Fund has three streams of funding. The first, the jobs and investment program, is designed to help companies in a range of sectors to expand in Ontario and develop innovative products for global markets—up to 15% of eligible project costs. The second, the biopharmaceutical investment program, supports the expansion of research and advanced manufacturing by pharmaceutical and biotechnology firms—up to 20% of eligible project costs. The third, the strategic opportunities program, supports industry-led public-private collaborations focused on increasing Ontario's innovation expertise in the bioeconomy and clean technologies, advanced health technologies and creative industries—up to 25% of eligible project or program costs. In addition, the Ontario research commercialization program provides grants ranging from \$100,000 to \$750,000 a year for up to three years. This helps publicly funded Ontario research institutions and not-for-profit organizations transfer their research to the marketplace.

For this Ideas for the Future Act, 2008, we also have the support of Dr. Paul Genest, president and CEO of the Council of Ontario Universities. Dr. Genest says that this new tax measure would help create a greener, healthier, economically stronger province by tapping into our research excellence, strengthening the partnerships between researchers and businesses, and promoting commercial success. If this bill is passed, a qualifying corporation that commercializes an idea would be eligible for the tax exemption if developed at a Canadian university, college or research institute.

We're taking the next step in sending a message to researchers and companies around the world. That message is that if you've got an innovative project that will build on our research strengths and create jobs, Ontario is the place to be. In fact, when foreign venture capital invests in Canada, 60% of that capital comes to Ontario. Ontario's competitive strengths do attract business investment and create jobs.

The McGuinty government is investing in key sectors and making the tax system more competitive to promote investment and encourage economic growth. But we have to do more. A fast-moving global economy is the reality, and Ontario must compete—and compete to win. Innovation is one of the keys to the future of our economy, and the McGuinty government recognizes its importance in an increasingly competitive global market.

As I mentioned when I introduced the bill earlier this month, I'm working closely with my colleague the Honourable John Wilkinson, Minister of Research and Innovation.

This legislation would also provide for flexibility so that other innovative technologies can be added in the future.

I'd like to mention some of the key qualifications for this proposed tax incentive. The company must be a new start-up incorporated in Canada after March 24, 2008, and before March 25, 2012. In addition, substantially all of the company's revenues must come from a new active business in the priority areas for economic growth. Priority areas for economic growth include advanced health; bioeconomy, which includes initiatives related to clean energy and telecommunications; and computer or digital media technologies. Eligible intellectual property must be developed by an employee or a student of a qualifying Canadian research institute. Finally, the company must be in the business of commercializing eligible intellectual property developed at a qualifying Canadian research institute.

The Minister of Research and Innovation, my colleague Minister Wilkinson, will be responsible for certifying an eligible commercialization business and would issue a certificate of eligibility to the qualifying corporation for the purpose of applying to the Minister of Revenue for a refund. I ask members to pass this measure, so that we can get these ideas of the future working here in Ontario today to create jobs. This initiative builds on our existing measures to cut taxes for businesses, such as eliminating Ontario's capital tax and reducing high business education tax rates across the province.

I'd like to take a moment to speak about that economy. There are challenges, and they include the slumping US economy and the current global economic turmoil. We saw these challenges ahead, and that's why last fall we introduced a comprehensive five-point plan for the economy. We will continue to implement that plan of investing in skills and knowledge, investing in infrastructure, enhancing Ontario's competitiveness through strategic tax cuts for businesses, strengthening the environment for innovation, and forming key partnerships to strengthen Ontario's industries. The plan does not and cannot cover everything, but it does effectively help with matters that we can control.

Since October 2003, more than 449,000 net new jobs have been created in Ontario—51,000 net new jobs this year—with real wages increasing. However, as we all know, certain key sectors, such as manufacturing, forestry, agriculture and tourism, face serious challenges. So far in 2008, we know that employment is up 1.7% from a year ago, retail sales are up 5.4%, wages are up 4.6% and housing starts are up 19.6%.

Two days ago, I released the economic accounts for the second quarter of calendar year 2008. While second quarter GDP is up, my concern is not whether we have two quarters of negative growth in a row but a protracted period of little or no growth. That's why, like Ontario families who are tightening their household finances, we will continue to make the necessary adjustments to best respond to the needs of the economy and of all Ontarians. This bill is a fundamental part of Ontario's five-point economic plan, which will help us sustain the high quality of life we enjoy today and create the high-value-added jobs of the future.

In closing, I'd like to talk about an important point in the big picture. We believe that for much of our work to count in a meaningful way, Ontario requires a true partner in the federal government. Ontario is reaching out to the federal government, and our hope is that it will listen. We're not looking for a special deal or anything beyond what is fair for Ontarians. The Premier recently launched an online petition that's getting people talking during this federal election. He is asking Ontarians to sign the online petition to ensure fairness for Ontario, and I encourage all Ontarians to visit www.fairness.ca.

What we're going to require after the next federal election is a partner who is more committed than in the past, a partner who understands that you can't leave our auto sector on its own, that you can't have unfair employment insurance benefits, that you can't have a situation where Ontario doesn't get equal per capita health care funding—and not have to wait for that until 2014. The facts about employment insurance, health care funding, economic development and infrastructure funding are there and, in many cases, acknowledged by the federal government. We're also calling on Ottawa to put in place an economic development strategy for southern Ontario. Every part of the country except southern Ontario has such a strategy.

I ask my honourable colleagues to pass this measure, so that we can get these ideas for the future working here

today in Ontario. By helping to maintain a tax system that promotes investment, encourages economic growth and supports Ontario's fundamental strengths, all Ontarians win.

0920

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Pickering–Scarborough East.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I'll keep my comments relatively short, so that all sides of the House will have an opportunity during this period of debate to share equally in the time allocated.

I'm happy to rise on Bill 100, the Ideas for the Future Act. This is a cornerstone piece of legislation that will encourage turning innovation into Ontario jobs by establishing high-tech companies here in Ontario. As the minister said, I certainly urge all members, when the time comes, to offer support to this bill. It's intended to attract individuals with great ideas from across Canada, not just Ontario, to set up businesses right here in Ontario. The bill will provide a 10-year corporate tax exemption for new companies that turn homegrown ideas into Ontario jobs and products.

In an increasingly global market, we're helping to launch the next wave of Ontario innovators. The legislation allows for flexibility, so that other innovative technologies can be added in the future. We're sending a message to researchers and companies around the world. That message is that if you've got an innovative project that will build on our research strength and create jobs, Ontario is the place to be. The Ontario government is helping workers and families across the province, and we're helping businesses and communities, too. We're helping to make the transition to a new period of economic growth. The McGuinty government is investing in key sectors and making the tax system more competitive to promote investment and encourage economic growth. A fast-moving global economy is the reality, and Ontario must compete, and compete to win.

This bill would encourage Ontario entrepreneurs to commercialize public research in areas such as bio-economy/clean technologies and telecommunications, advanced health technologies, and computer and digital technologies. These are important sectors of our economy that we must succeed in if we want Ontario to be a global leader. They are the keystones for the new and evolving economy.

Here is how the bill would work. A researcher working at a college or university develops an idea to improve upon an existing product. He or she then proceeds to take that idea to market and sets up a corporate entity to make that happen. The corporation could then be eligible for this 10-year tax exemption. This is a rather simplified version of the events that would have to take place, but it gives you an idea of how the legislation would assist in promoting innovation in Ontario.

Innovation is one of the keys to the future of our economy, and the McGuinty government recognizes its importance in an increasingly competitive global market. This landmark corporate tax measure is the first of its

kind in Ontario and in Canada. It provides a strong incentive for firms to take ideas and turn them into real commercialized products. The government is helping to maintain a tax system that promotes investment, encourages economic growth and supports Ontario's fundamental strengths.

What we are trying to do is encourage Ontario entrepreneurs to commercialize public research in these leading areas. We're supporting innovative business in commercializing research at post-secondary educational institutions and research institutes, because this government believes that our colleges, universities and research institutes provide a wealth of knowledge that can be tapped into to capitalize on innovation. In fact, the associations that represent Ontario's colleges and universities support this bill. The bill has a champion in Dr. Paul C. Genest, president and CEO of the Council of Ontario Universities. The bill also has the clear support of Linda Franklin, president and CEO of Colleges Ontario.

Right now, somewhere in a lab here in Toronto, in Oshawa or in any number of places throughout the province, Ontarians are helping to invent the future. They're discovering new ways to treat disease and cleaner ways to create power. This legislation supports Ontario's ambitious, innovative agenda. Our 2008 budget promotes a culture of innovation and builds on the government's innovation agenda through almost \$300 million in new investments and proposed tax incentives that support the start-up and growth of innovative ideas. We are investing in an aggressive innovation agenda to ensure that we are one of the winning economies in the 21st century.

As I said in the beginning, I encourage all members of this Legislature to support Bill 100.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the people of Wellington-Halton Hills this morning and participate briefly in this debate on Bill 100, Ideas for the Future Act, 2008, and respond to the Minister of Finance and his parliamentary assistant.

I've had a chance to review some of the issues surrounding this bill this morning and I find it something that I believe I can support in principle. It's a modest proposal on the part of the government to attempt to address the economic challenges that we're facing in this province today. As I understand it, this bill will support innovation, as the government has said, allowing companies to apply for a tax refund—if they create a brand new company, I should say, and take an idea developed at a university, college or research institute and turn it into marketable goods and services.

I have one question for the Minister of Finance or perhaps his parliamentary assistant, if they will answer it. The question is, why is it that research that is developed at colleges and universities and research institutes is the only research that is deemed eligible for this sort of favourable tax treatment? Why is it that research that is developed in the private sector is not eligible for this same kind of tax treatment? I would hope that the parliamentary assistant will respond to this.

I'm looking forward to the presentation this morning by our finance critic, the member for Niagara West-Glanbrook. He's going to speak for approximately an hour, I think. I look forward to his thoughts on the economy, generally speaking, as well as the challenges that we're facing, because as you well know, the province of Ontario has lost more than 200,000 manufacturing jobs in—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's 240,000.

Mr. Ted Arnott: My colleague from Halton, who is our economic development critic, advises me it's 240,000. Clearly, the government needs to come forward with an action plan that is actually effective in addressing this serious concern. We're talking about many thousands of families who are facing real economic hardship because they've lost a good-paying job that they may have had for many years and, I'm sure, are finding difficulty replacing that lost income.

I would ask the parliamentary assistant to address this issue and answer my question.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the minister and his parliamentary assistant today, and they used two perplexing words, given the scope and the magnitude of this particular bill. The minister called this a landmark bill. By "landmark," I take it that this is something that is going to set Ontario and Canada and the world aside because it's going to be so magnificent that it's going to be like the Eiffel Tower or Niagara Falls or something you just can't miss. My colleague the parliamentary assistant called it a cornerstone, and by "cornerstone," I think of that by which a whole building is built and upon which everything else rests, that which is the foundation. So you can understand how perplexed I am when we made some inquiries yesterday as to approximately how much the government is going to spend on this particular bill, how much the taxpayers are going to foot for this magnificent new experiment, this landmark, this cornerstone, of legislation, and discovered to our dismay that it's \$5 million this year and \$7 million next year. I want to say that if this is such a landmark and a cornerstone, then I find it passing strange that the government is investing so little of its budget in this area and is investing so little of the capital of this province, if in fact they intend that this is going to do something. Five million dollars this year and \$7 million next year is not going to establish a lot of jobs in this province. In a province where we bleed jobs almost every day, in a province where this morning I woke up and saw what was happening in Goderich, it saddened me to the quick.

0930

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I also have been listening intently this morning, and it's my pleasure to rise and join the discussion on An Act to amend the Corporations Tax Act, or the short title, the Ideas for the Future Act.

I am proud to reinforce that this government has a five-point plan for the economy, which includes invest-

ing in creating an environment for innovation. This legislation is a key component to encourage investment and also fits in with strategic tax cuts to encourage investment. This is about jobs. This is about the next generation of jobs. This is about bringing those jobs to Ontario, both now and in the future.

I just want to take a minute to talk about my constituents in the riding of Kitchener–Conestoga. We are very, very familiar with innovation and the positive effect that innovation has had. Specifically, we have Conestoga College right in the riding, and in the larger Waterloo region we have the University of Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier University. We have experienced the wonderful phenomena of Pickstream, of Canada's Technology Triangle and, of course, Research In Motion—you're all familiar with the BlackBerry.

We have seen how things have developed and strengthened in our communities. We have seen and witnessed first-hand the effect this innovation has on our economy, the effect this innovation has on our infrastructure and on our partnerships, the effect this innovation has on our lives in general. We have witnessed first-hand the skills of our youth, the retraining of our workforce and our competitive edge in a global economy. The McGuinty government is opening doors to the future, opening doors for our youth with these ideas for the future.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I think this is another one of those good ideas, but a huge missed opportunity. It's really unfortunate that the bill is too narrowly defined and that it helps just a tiny segment of the business community. It actually would only contribute to about 2% of the jobs in Ontario when we are in such tough economic times and have lost so many manufacturing jobs. I believe that what this bill does is list more ineligible than eligible companies and entities, and it lists them in a way that makes it so difficult for even the eligible organizations to participate, through all the paperwork that needs to be completed, that perhaps it may take the entire eligibility time of this initiative to do so. I think what that does is discourage.

It also could cost these organizations a lot of money to go through the process. It's been proven in other parts of the world and in other parts of Canada that this type of process is cost-ineffective. It costs the organizations a lot of money to hire additional staff just to go through the process.

I think we had an opportunity here to allow not just new organizations and not just public organizations to participate, but existing corporations that have proven themselves and perhaps could work through and bring to an end these new innovations much more quickly. After all, we need to do this to be competitive in Ontario. It's a missed opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Response?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I want to thank the members from Wellington–Halton Hills, Beaches–East York,

Kitchener–Conestoga and Burlington for their comments. Let me say that I'm particularly pleased, obviously, that folks were listening carefully to the minister in opening second reading debate and to the comments I had the opportunity to make as well.

The member from Wellington–Halton Hills was querying the sort of public-private sector initiative. Clearly, this legislation is targeting our colleges, universities and research institutes here in Canada to be able to create great ideas and see them commercialized here in Ontario. There are tax incentives in place already for research opportunities for the private sector, but this is clearly targeting that public sector, that new innovation, those in colleges and universities and research institutes in the country. This is a cornerstone, and the member from Beaches–East York spoke to the issues of cornerstone legislation and the like—it is. It is because it's a first in Canada. It's a clearly defined focus on the next generation of activity, that brainpower that comes out of those sectors, in turning great ideas into real products and creating real jobs here in the province of Ontario.

My friend from Kitchener–Conestoga mentioned RIM during her comments, and that's just one example that we're all so terribly familiar with. It wasn't that long ago in this Legislature—I recall arriving five years ago and was somewhat surprised to find that so many members on all sides were yet to use a BlackBerry. It was like a new tool, and by that time I'd had the opportunity to use one for a few years. Now, virtually everyone here is taking advantage of those types of opportunities. Those are the types of great ideas that we want to see produced here in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I want to say at the start it's the first time I've seen on the second reading of a bill that the parliamentary assistant's two-minute rebuttal was longer than his entire remarks. Holy smokes, they call it a landmark piece of legislation, a cornerstone for the economy, and they barely gave passing remarks here in the Legislature, not even using up half their time.

Landmark legislation, cornerstone—glory hallelujah, Bill 100 is at second reading. Hark, the herald angels sing. This is going to turn the economy around because of, as my colleague from Beaches–East York said, a \$5-million to \$7-million investment in the economy. Holy cats: \$5 million to \$7 million, the Minister of Finance's own figures on what the economic impact of this legislation is going to be.

Let's put that into perspective, by the way. My friend the member for Wellington—

Mr. Ted Arnott: Halton Hills.

Mr. Tim Hudak: —Wellington–Halton Hills points out on page 26 of the Ontario budget 2008-09 that the Ministry of Tourism is “investing \$8 million ... to conduct research on new tourism markets, inform Ontario's tourism strategy” etc. Eight million dollars in a tourism study alone actually dwarfs the value that the Ministry of Finance believes that this will have for Ontario businesses.

By the way, on that topic—and I know my friend from St. Catharines, a former tourism minister, probably has the exact same concerns that I do: \$8 million, a sort of farewell party for Greg Sorbara, is a bit of an abuse of taxpayer dollars. Maybe I'll give him the benefit of the doubt. We'll see what kind of study comes at the end of the day. Well, listen, he was successful. He won by a large margin last election. To give him credit as chair of the Ontario election campaign, he did have two majority government wins. So in the annals of Liberal Party history—

Applause.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Go ahead and applaud Greg Sorbara. You are sending him off on a world tour to the tourism capitals of the world to thank him for all his work on behalf of the Ontario Liberal Party. We don't see him much here in the Ontario Legislature anymore, because he is probably travelling to Tokyo and Paris and Milan and New York and San Francisco and Auckland—the list would go on and on. Probably the places Greg Sorbara is going to visit on the backs of the \$8 million from Ontario taxpayers would take my entire hour, so I won't go into that much longer.

Interjection.

Mr. Tim Hudak: No, Greg Sorbara is a good friend of Dalton McGuinty's. He helped him to win two election campaigns and he's being rewarded with this gold-plated, \$8-million fun fund—paid for, by the way, by hard-pressed Ontario taxpayers, who are facing higher fuel costs, higher home heating costs, higher grocery costs, higher taxes and, thanks to Dalton McGuinty's new assessment scheme, skyrocketing property assessments, coming in their mailboxes this fall.

Bill 100 is at second reading. I'll give a little bit of credit to the Minister of Finance. He is at least finally proposing some form of tax reductions in the province of Ontario. I know it's one of these “We're freezing over” type things—the Liberals actually proposing a tax reduction of some kind. To keep the religious theme, it's a bit of a conversion on the road to Damascus, although, sadly, the Liberal wagon pulled over on the road with Damascus barely in sight. As has been pointed out, this so-called tax break is extremely narrow in focus, heavily bureaucratic, and weighed down by ideology that says government bureaucrats and politicians are better at picking winners and losers than the markets or full-time, experienced investors.

0940

Interjection.

Mr. Tim Hudak: It's true. My friend the Minister of Research and Innovation groans at that comment. But you're going to be a busy fella. You're going to be an extremely busy fella if this legislation passes, because the Minister of Research and Innovation personally, according to the bill, is going to sign off on these certificates of eligibility. You, sir, will be the judge, jury and executioner when it comes to these companies coming to Queen's Park to ask you to bless their projects and approve them under the narrow confines of this legislation

so they can benefit from a tax reduction, which, by the way, in the majority of cases, I think will be relatively small because for many of these firms it takes some time before they're making profits of any particular value.

Why don't I get into that a little bit early in my remarks? When you look at the actual legislation—I know my colleague the Minister of Research and Innovation is listening quite closely—the Minister of Research and Innovation, under Bill 100 as it reads today, would determine who is eligible for a certificate of eligibility. So every company that wants to take advantage of this tax incentive would then apply to the Minister of Research and Innovation for a certificate of eligibility. This is section 57.15 of the legislation:

“Certificate of eligibility

“57.15(1) To be eligible to apply for a refund under this part, a qualifying corporation must apply for, be eligible to receive and receive a certificate of eligibility for the year issued by the Minister of Research and Innovation.”

I will ask the minister, and maybe he could reply later on during debate, if this means that every year, each individual corporation would have to reapply for the fund, according to 57.15.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Do you have to be a Liberal to apply?

Mr. Tim Hudak: My colleague from Halton asks if you have to be a Liberal to apply. I don't think that will be the case. It doesn't say that in the legislation.

However, the point I'm making is, when the McGuinty government is convinced that the bureaucrats who will be hired to run this new program—because we know there will be a significant number of hirings of more government workers to determine which companies are eligible and ineligible, what year they're eligible for etc. Maybe the minister will reply on exactly how many new individuals he will be hiring. Maybe those 600 or so people who lost their jobs, sadly, at Volvo in Goderich or the 800 individuals who lost their jobs at John Deere in Welland with the decline in the manufacturing sector in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario will be looking for jobs. I hope the minister will describe exactly how many jobs they are going to create in his ministry to referee this particular part of the act.

My colleague from Halton asks, “Do you have to be a Liberal firm to qualify?” Well, it doesn't say that in the legislation, but I worry that if it's the minister himself who is deciding what companies are eligible and ineligible—and it's very grey in the legislation which companies are going to be eligible because of the definitions; it gives great scope for regulation-making—there will be heavy lobbying efforts upon the minister himself, or herself, if that changes down the road, to determine whether a company is eligible. So while you may not have to be a Liberal to apply, I say to my colleague from Halton, it certainly is going to help sell tickets to the minister's fundraiser.

Section 57.15 goes on to detail how the application system will work: “An application for a certificate of

eligibility for a taxation year shall be made to the Minister of Research and Innovation after the end of the year to which it relates, in a form approved by the Minister of Research and Innovation.” So not only will you be determining, from a big stack of papers on your desk, who will be eligible for these certificates, as you sign them one by one, but you also get to determine exactly what the form will look like. So I’m sure you’ll be busy in the time ahead, if Bill 100 passes, in determining what this form is going to look like.

Let me point this out as well: The government describes this as a tax reduction. In reality, when you look at Bill 100, it’s a refund with a very heavily, thickly bureaucratic process to apply for those funds. So if you picture some of the companies that are being targeted, and my colleague from Kitchener–Conestoga had spoken about young university students etc., they are going to be relatively, I would think—well, actually, extensively—hard-pressed to work through a thick bureaucratic system, first to apply for the certificate of eligibility from the minister and then to take that certificate in hand to the Minister of Revenue, another ministry altogether, and begin negotiations to receive a refund from the Ministry of Revenue. I’m not sure that the process—all paperwork, by the way; it’s not electronic—dealing with two and perhaps three different ministries is conducive to helping these young entrepreneurs who may be recent graduates, may be university or college students etc.

“Additional information or records

“57.15(3) A corporation applying for a certificate of eligibility shall provide such additional information or records as the Minister of Research and Innovation may specify in order to evaluate the application.

“Criteria for issuing certificate of eligibility

“(4) The Minister of Research and Innovation may issue a certificate of eligibility to the corporation for the year if he or she is satisfied that the corporation carried on an eligible commercialization business during the year.”

What does that mean, “eligible commercialization business during the year”? Well, our young entrepreneurs, busy making new innovations and trying to get them to market, will have the distinct pleasure of reading through Bill 100 and the extensive definitions.

Under the definitions section:

“‘eligible commercialization business’ means an active business,

“(a) that in the opinion of the Minister of Research and Innovation is,

“(i) an advanced health technology business,

“(ii) a bioeconomy business,

“(iii) a telecommunications, computer or digital technologies production business that is primarily engaged in activities described in categories 3341, 3342, 3344 or 5112 of the North American Industry Classification System 2007–Canada, as published by Statistics Canada, or,” the catch-all,

“(iv) a business that is prescribed by or that satisfies the conditions prescribed by the Minister of Finance....”

And that’s not all. So if you are a young entrepreneur with a new innovation you want to take to market and you want to benefit from this refund, not only would you have to win the support of the Minister of Research and Innovation to get one of these prized certificates of eligibility, but you would have to find out what an eligible commercialization business is; you would have to read through Bill 100. And then heaven forbid you’re in communications, computer or digital technologies, because you’re going to have to figure out what the heck categories 3341, 3342, 3344 or—don’t forget—5112 of the North American Industry Classification System 2007—Canada, as published by Statistics Canada, are. If I listened closely to the minister and the parliamentary assistant, I don’t think they described exactly what categories 3341, 3342, 3344, or 5112 in fact are.

But, as the expression goes, that ain’t all. Our young, intrepid entrepreneur then would have to satisfy a second criterion:

“(b) that in the opinion of the Minister of Research and Innovation has as its sole purpose,

“(i) the sale of property that derives more than 50 per cent of its value from eligible intellectual property,

“(ii) the sale of property an essential element of which is eligible intellectual property,

“(iii) the licensing of computer programs that are eligible intellectual property, or

“(iv) such other purpose as may be prescribed by the Minister of Finance; and

“(c) that satisfies such other conditions as may be prescribed by the Minister of Finance....”

So let’s take this back a step. Not only would our young entrepreneur with an innovation that she wants to take to market have to win the support of the Minister of Research and Innovation, would have to be in one of those very narrowly defined fields, very much open to interpretation, and then satisfy the Minister of Finance that certain conditions are met with respect to the value of the intellectual property—if we’re talking about small firms, we’re talking about entrepreneurs who have an innovation and are desperately trying to get it to market, who have small levels of capitalization, and who are very busy in developing those markets. To think they will have the spare time to walk through this heavily thick bureaucratic process is, I fear, wishful thinking at best. It gets worse, by the way.

0950

There are further definitions in terms of exactly what a bioeconomy business is and what exactly an advanced health business is. Let me see here:

“‘advanced health technology business’ means a business that is primarily engaged in using technology,

“(a) in the development of assistive medical devices, pharmaceutical drugs, regenerative medicine, biologics, medical procedures or surgical procedures, or

“(b) in human tissue engineering....”

“Bioeconomy” is also defined:

“(a) the production of biofuel, biogas or bioplastics, or

“(b) the development of technology or processes that enable the use of wind, water, a biomass resource, hydrogen, biofuel, biogas, landfill gas, solar energy, geothermal energy, tidal forces or thermal waste as a source of energy....”

I will look forward, with some interest, to the estimates for 2009-10, if the minister does appear at that committee, to see exactly how many staff have been hired to referee all of these definitions, to referee this thick process and to referee exactly how somebody will get a certificate of eligibility, let alone before they begin the negotiations with the Ministry of Revenue. I would expect that the costs of implementing the regime, as you have brought forward, probably exceed the benefits. If it is \$5 million to \$7 million, then I would fully expect that the costs of actually running this through the three ministries involved—I wouldn't be surprised if it exceeded that level of benefit because of the complexity of their system.

We as Progressive Conservatives believe in broad-based tax reductions. We have faith that businesses, if they are given the ability to compete on a level playing field, will be successful, hire more people, will innovate, will create wealth in our economy and help to turn our economy around. We have always known an Ontario that was a leader in Canada, and now, under the McGuinty government's tax-and-spend approach, it has fallen to last in Confederation in economic growth and in job creation.

Let me give you a few more reasons why I am concerned about the very narrow focus of Bill 100. As I said, I don't want to discourage the government. Finally they have seen the light that their early decisions to raise taxes on working families and seniors, which sucked up disposable income from our economy, their early decision to raise business taxes to the point now where, according to their own special adviser to the Premier, Roger Martin, they are now the highest on new business investment in all of North America—we have seen a price in terms of lost jobs in the province, slow growth and low levels of wealth creation. So I think, though they probably won't admit it here during debate on Bill 100, finally the McGuinty government understands that their early decisions, some of which were clear election promises that were broken, have been harmful to our economy. Dalton McGuinty's penchant for runaway spending, high taxes on businesses, consumers, seniors and working families, runaway red tape and high energy costs have exacted a real price on Ontario families and on Ontario businesses.

So Bill 100, as I've explained, when you actually read the bill, far from a landmark or cornerstone piece of legislation, is actually very narrowly focused, heavily bureaucratic and weighed down by an ideology that says that the minister and the staff around him are best at picking winners and losers, rather than markets or people who are full-time investors.

The refund—I should be careful; it is not really a tax cut—is only available, as well, to new businesses, so

businesses incorporated between March 24, 2008, and March 25, 2012, and it excludes the merger of two existing businesses and provides no incentive whatsoever for existing businesses to commercialize new intellectual property. So if there is a business in Ontario—and there are many—that is successful and has a demonstrated track record of success in commercializing new businesses and taking the innovations from the labs, from the think tanks etc. and bringing them to market, this actually will cause a disincentive for new innovations to use successful businesses to go to market.

Interjection.

Mr. Tim Hudak: My friend the minister disagrees, but there is no tax benefit, there is no refund to existing businesses. If I wanted to benefit from this and I had an innovation, I would have to start my own company, rather than relying on somebody or partnering with somebody who already has demonstrated expertise and success in the marketplace.

I do appreciate my colleague from Wellington-Halton Hills's suggestion that this would go to committee, that we would hear from those who are impacted by this legislation and look for ways of broadening its impact, from the very narrow-focused and bureaucratic approach that Minister Duncan has decided was superior.

The second major concern we have in the official opposition: The refund under Bill 100 is only available to new businesses in the following government-identified priority areas—as I read through earlier on in the definition section of the bill, what's called an eligible commercialization business—advanced health technology, bioeconomy, telecommunications, and computer or digital technologies production. These are all important industries. They're all job-creating industries. They have impacts in various parts of the province. The problem is that that represents approximately only about 2% of GDP in the province of Ontario. So some 98% of other industries who may be bringing an innovation to market, who may want to commercialize a new discovery, a new way of doing things, would not have any benefit whatsoever from Bill 100. We think that should change and we will bring an amendment forward that will change that, so the other 98% of new businesses in the province could benefit from this approach, if this is the one the government chooses to take.

The other major concern we have on the narrow focus of the bill is that it is only available to businesses that bring to market intellectual property developed at qualifying institutions, excluding intellectual property developed outside universities, colleges, non-profits and hospitals. “The sole purpose of an eligible commercialization business must be the sale of property that derives ... 50% of its value from eligible” IP “developed at a qualifying institute.” Therefore, Mr. Speaker, if you or I were to patent an idea or a product that was developed outside of one of the government-approved institutes, we would not qualify for the tax refund. Maybe we'll hear from members of the government side during debate why they have narrowly limited where the intellectual prop-

erty can come from. If you do this on your own, in your own home, you would not be eligible for this fund. If you, heaven forbid, worked in the private sector, where the wealth in the province of Ontario actually comes from, you would not be eligible for the tax benefit, because the intellectual property would be deemed ineligible.

I really can't for the life of me understand why they have done a very, very narrow focus. We will bring forward an amendment to this bill that broadens its impact. Obviously yes, intellectual property developed at our outstanding universities and colleges should qualify; those in hospitals should qualify. But I don't know why you draw the line and say that only those that are approved by the government under the regulation-making authority of this bill should benefit, why it's not more broad-based or why the McGuinty government, because of its ideological bent, which if you read through Bill 100 is anti-private sector—

Hon. John Gerretsen: We have no ideological bent.

Mr. Tim Hudak: No, no, I say to my colleague the minister, this is very ideological, right? You're basically saying that the private sector need not apply. If you are a private small business, if you are an individual who doesn't work at a university or a college or a hospital, you can't apply for this. Only those deemed eligible by the McGuinty government, the limited list that I read a bit earlier, qualify for this. We think it should be broader. We think it should include a much broader range, including those that come from the private sector, those who are individuals that make the government short list not just because of their ideological bent in Bill 100, which is anti private sector and only supports government-approved institutions.

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The sole purpose of the eligible business must be the sale of property that derives 50% of its value from eligible IP developed at the qualifying institute, which I discussed, a very narrow focus of those that would qualify under this legislation.

The other important point—and I'm pleased that the Minister of Research and Innovation is here for debate, because he will play an important role in this and the Minister of Revenue.

Mrs. Julia Munro: That's why it's Waterloo.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Because he lives close to Waterloo? Fair point.

Interjection.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The minister lives in Stratford? The minister lives in Stratford, so not too far down the road from Waterloo.

Certainly, the Cambridge-Kitchener-Waterloo triangle has many of the businesses that we want to see qualify for Bill 100 under the amendments that we will propose, given that we're in committee.

I would strongly suggest to the minister—given these are, ideally, businesses to make a profit, to create jobs and wealth in the province of Ontario—that you put a timeline into the bill, so that when people apply for their

certificate of eligibility they will have a response, yea or nay—and hopefully, if our amendments pass, more yeas than nays—so that they will know that it was done in a short time frame so they can move forward with their decisions, their investments and their growth plans without spending months and months or years on end waiting for this thick bureaucratic process to end. I see the minister has made some notes on that. I appreciate that, and hopefully we'll see that improvement to the bill—strict and clear timeframes for responses for those who apply for the refund under Bill 100.

At the same time, if I did read Bill 100 properly, this is a paper-based process: The applications are paper-based, the certificate of eligibility is paper-based and the refund would be paper-based. It's relatively ironic that when this government is focusing this legislation in large part on new technologies, improvements, software etc., the application process would be paper-based. I do hope that we will see in this legislation an ability to apply for this tax refund electronically, which would be the way that most of these businesses will do business. That certainly would, I expect, expedite the process. I hope those changes are made.

But most importantly, we will be calling for, in addition to our usual approach of broad-based tax reductions to encourage businesses to invest in the province of Ontario, to remove Ontario's image under Dalton McGuinty's government of having the highest taxes on new business investment to one that is actually open for investment and job creation and a leader in all of Canada. As I said, Bill 100's impact on that larger picture, if Ministry of Finance figures are accurate, between \$5 million and \$7 million would not be up to the level the government would boast of in their grandiose language and their opening remarks. We do hope, though, that amendments to Bill 100 that will be proposed by the Progressive Conservative caucus would make this a much more valuable tool for new businesses.

During my response at first reading, I had a chance to give some views of experts in the field on Bill 100, and I know that these well-respected individuals' comments will be taken quite seriously by the government. They seem to reinforce the critique that the official opposition is bringing forward, and what I expect my friend from Beaches—East York, on behalf of the third party, would also recommend. Roger Martin, in his appearance at the finance committee in pre-budget consultations, January 1, 2008—so not too long ago. Roger Martin, of course, the dean of the Rotman School of Management and a special advisor to the Premier, was also one of our guest speakers at the recent economic summit hosted by John Tory and co-hosted by Ted Chudleigh, my colleague the economic development critic, and I. Mr. Martin, in his comments on the government's general approach during the finance committee, said the following:

“We've got to define and support innovation broadly. Innovation is critical to upgrading competitiveness, innovation and policy, and Ontario cannot characterize innovation so narrowly as it does. Whether or not there is

a truly conscious consideration of the issue, innovation policy in Ontario construes innovation to be something that happens in a narrow range of industries—computer hardware and software, communications hardware and software, aerospace vehicles and engines, pharmaceuticals and biotechnology, and medical devices—and that innovation is all about scientists working on technology.”

Mr. Martin went on to say that many of the firms that have been successful innovators, have created jobs and wealth in Ontario and have been successful, many of the multinationals, would not actually fit in with the very narrow definition of “innovation” used by the McGuinty government.

Let me give you an example: Innovations made by Masonite, Four Seasons, Couche-Tard, Gildan, Magna and McCain, which are all global leaders, companies of which we should be proud in terms of the investments and jobs that they’ve created in our country, would not be counted as innovations under the McGuinty government’s extremely narrow definition. That was Roger Martin appearing at the finance committee.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: That was before we introduced Bill 100.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Yes, sure. My friend from London—Fanshawe says that it was before we introduced Bill 100. It’s true: It was the January 21, 2008, finance committee. But the same types of decisions that you were making in January with the very narrow definition of “innovation” continue in Bill 100. My earlier points, when you read through under the legislation what an eligible commercialization business would include—it’s very narrowly focused. So I think Roger Martin’s comments to the finance committee in January hold true as we enter the first day of October 2008, when you read through Bill 100’s definitions.

Jim Milway, executive director of the government-funded Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity—they do some excellent reports, as you know, Mr. Speaker. They’re always very good reading and thoughtful. Mr. Milway criticized the government’s decision to give a 10-year tax reduction to new businesses.

“If a new technology becomes available, he said, an existing business will have no particular incentive to develop it—even though an already successful firm might be able to do so faster and better than a start-up company could. Lowering overall taxes would be more effective, he said.

““It would do more for innovation.””

That was Mr. Milway, quoted in an article entitled, “Ontario’s ‘Innovation Agenda’ Does Nothing to Save Jobs, Tory MPP Says; Critics of Plan Say it Does Little to Help Existing Businesses.” That was the Ottawa Citizen, May 1, 2008—a similar critique that we are bringing forward in the official opposition: that successful existing firms could actually bring a new innovation to market faster and, because of their experience, successfully, have no benefit whatsoever in this bill. In fact, it creates an incentive for new innovators not to use existing and successful businesses.

Gary Will, in the Waterloo Tech Digest, May 6, 2008, said the following:

“I’m still opposed to the government’s proposal to offer income tax exemptions to companies commercializing university-created IP—but not to other companies commercializing innovation. This may be the final relic of old-school innovation theories—that innovation is something that primarily happens in universities and labs and that university-generated innovation should be given special treatment over other innovations, regardless of the potential economic impact that each offers.

“Great ideas with the potential for significant economic benefits to the province can come from anywhere. With any luck, it won’t take another two or three years to overthrow the view that innovations generated outside universities and labs are less deserving of support.”

Again, that was Gary Will, Waterloo Tech Digest, May 6, 2008. Mr. Will makes a very important point, again reflected in the critique of the official opposition on Bill 100. No doubt that if they’re using this approach of a refund under Bill 100, the universities, colleges, hospitals—the innovations that stem from there, good research—should benefit. The question we have is, why does the government limit it to only these government-approved institutions? Why does it have this bias against everything else? Why does it have this ideological bent against the private sector coming up with innovations? Gary Will echoed those concerns in his comments in Tech Digest in May.

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Paul Mayne, in an article in Western News, April 7, 2008: “According to the C.D. Howe Institute, Ontario’s new 10-year corporate income tax holiday for commercialized intellectual property developed by qualifying research institutions is ‘ill-designed.’ Tax holidays, also used in Quebec, are high-cost, low-impact policies, typically found in Third World countries and well proven to be ineffective.” Those are some pretty harsh comments. Sources: Chen and Mintz, Limited Horizons: The 2008 Report on Federal and Provincial Budgetary Tax Policies, C.D. Howe Institute, July 2008; and Anwar Shah, Fiscal Incentives for Investment and Innovation, Oxford University Press, 1995.

Rob Herold, industry liaison officer for engineering and sciences at the University of Western Ontario, my alma mater—go, Mustangs—says that long-term capital-intensive opportunities, such as nano-materials and therapeutics, may take as much as 10 years to become profitable, although they may generate lots of knowledge-worker jobs in the process. “I don’t see the program necessarily changing the investors’ decisions in these cases.”

There are other things I want to say about the bill, so I’ll end with this quote, again from Gary Will in Waterloo Tech Digest, May 6, 2008: “If the Ontario government wants to give a tax break to new companies commercializing innovative technology, let it extend that benefit to all tech start-ups regardless of their starting points. If the goal is to assist in the economic develop-

ment of the province, it shouldn't matter whether companies that drive our economic success are university spinoffs or not."

I agree, and I would think that my colleagues across the floor in the government benches would agree. I don't think this bent by Dalton McGuinty to be anti-private sector is shared by the colleagues in the Legislature today. Many of them come from private business backgrounds, and I hope they will support the PC amendment that follows the advice of Gary Will and others to allow the benefit to accrue to other start-ups, not simply those that come from the university sector.

Let me read that one last time. Gary Will had good advice, and I hope it does sink in as we deliberate on Bill 100. Mr. Will said, "If the Ontario government wants to give a tax break to new companies commercializing innovative technology, let it extend that benefit to all tech start-ups regardless of their starting points. If the goal is to assist in the economic development of the province, it shouldn't matter whether companies that drive our economic success are university spinoffs or not."

Let's delve into that a little bit and give some real-life examples.

Waterloo region has a venture capital firm, Tech Capital Partners. My colleagues from the area or those who follow this may be familiar with Tech Capital Partners. The companies that Tech Capital Partners invests in would be ranked among the most promising tech companies in the area. It's an impressive record from Tech Capital Partners. Of the companies it has invested in over the last eight years, 79% were not commercializing technology from university employees or students. Tech Capital Partners has a successful track record of investing in companies, helping them take new innovations into the marketplace, creating jobs and wealth in the province of Ontario—mind you, the more people are working, the more wealth is created; the more companies are operating in the black, the more revenue to government to help them to finance things like health care, education or the train to Peterborough, by way of example. The sad thing is that under the extremely narrow and ideological approach of the McGuinty government that seems to be anti-business, only 20% of the firms that Tech Capital Partners has invested in would be eligible under the narrow confines of Bill 100. They said that 79% of the firms they've invested in to help get into the marketplace were not commercializing technology from university employees or students.

Metranome: Metranome is a developer of wireless digital media applications—supposedly one of the government's priorities. But it was founded by ex-Research In Motion employees, and under the definitions under Bill 100, as I understand it, wouldn't qualify for this tax refund.

Primal Fusion—it's a good name—is a developer of sophisticated software that it hopes will revolutionize how we collect and organize ideas and find information on the Web. It has doubled in size over the last year. It's an Ontario firm creating jobs, investing in our province—not eligible under the definitions of Bill 100.

Client Outlook has created imaging tools. Again, it's digital media used in the health care field for remote collaboration and training; again, a successful company, entrepreneurs, innovative, the kind of model you'd think the government would want to support, if they're doing a tax incentive like this. It doesn't fit the definitions, the narrow constraints of Bill 100.

I hope I get a response from the government members in their time in debate on Bill 100. If they want to replicate, if they want to support these types of entrepreneurs, those that are creating jobs in the new economy, that are in the tech sector, why then are they not emulating the success and supporting the companies that have successfully commercialized? Why then are they narrowly defining the scope of this legislation so that these types of companies or the next generation of them would be ineligible?

Speaking of the tech side, let me get to the crux of the matter here. I'm going to recommend this article to members, a National Post article of March 5, 2007. It was just over a year and a half ago, but I would suspect that the issues raised in this article have grown as a concern in late 2008. Mr. Speaker, you may remember this article. It was entitled, "Tech Start-ups Find it Tough to Raise Cash: Ontario a Wasteland for Technology Capital": Tony Wanless, National Post, March 5, 2007. Mr. Wanless tells the story of Dan Matlow, chief executive officer of Toronto's Medworxx. Though Mr. Matlow "is a veteran technology entrepreneur with a string of successful businesses behind him, it wasn't easy for him to find money to expand his latest venture. That's because there isn't much available to technology businesses these days."

In 2004, "Mr. Matlow co-founded Medworxx, which provides knowledge management software to the health care industry in Canada and the United States. It was financed by his own money with the support of some angel investment backers." Angel investors, of course, are high-net-worth individuals who invest privately in a company's earliest stage.

I'll pause Mr. Matlow's story for a second. I want to give credit to my colleague from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, who is the critic for the Ministry of Research and Innovation and at the estimates committee pressed the minister about this very issue: the lack of angel investors or incentives to bring capital to these early start-ups to address this issue that the article deems Ontario "a wasteland for technology capital." She asked the minister some excellent questions about this, and unfortunately the response in Bill 100 falls well short of what the true nature of the problem is, when it comes to these types of innovators and start-ups.

So in 2004, Medworxx was formed. Mr. Matlow co-founded, with his own money and financing from angel investors. Since then, Mr. Matlow "followed a predictable fundraising pattern to raise about \$2.4 million to expand his company from seven to 35 people," a fivefold increase, "and about 150 client hospitals throughout North America." That's impressive, right? In three years, he increased his workforce fivefold and has expanded his clients to 150 hospitals throughout North America.

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After bringing in the investors, “he received seed capital from the venture capital company, Growthworks, which manages several labour-sponsored investment funds (LSIFs), also known as labour-sponsored venture capital corporations (LSVCC).” We’ll get into these LSIFs and what happened to them under the McGuinty government momentarily.

“Usually, seed funding leads to follow-up rounds of larger financing by syndicates of venture capital companies, but when Matlow began looking last year for more than \$2 million for further expansion,” according to the article, “he hit a brick wall.”

Mr. Matlow’s story points out what the true nature of the problem is here, and that’s the gap between seed funders and investment banks and the lack of venture capital in these types of innovators and start-ups. I don’t think Bill 100 gets to the crux of the problem. I think Bill 100 falls well short of addressing the true issues.

I had the chance to do a roundtable with my colleague and friend from Nepean–Carleton, Lisa MacLeod. She’s very concerned about the demise of the tech sector that we’ve seen in Ottawa. A few months ago, she gathered up some young entrepreneurs and some veterans in the industry for a roundtable meeting to discuss how we can help take advantage of this enormous human capital in the Ottawa region that has been displaced from the larger firms, a lot of these types of start-ups. In 2001, they addressed this issue about access to capital in moving from the smaller phase into commercialization. I don’t remember them highlighting an approach as Bill 100 does, which is a relatively minimal refund. Hopefully, it will be helpful to many companies, particularly if they follow our advice and broaden its impact. But they said the true nature of the problem was encouraging angel investors, encouraging loans and investments in these small start-ups to get to that second phase, as Mr. Matlow’s story illustrates.

“After weeks of scouring Toronto for investment, Matlow put together his funding. But he had to be creative: He brought his original angel investors into a syndicate that included a couple of boutique private investment firms.

“I had no choice really,” Matlow says. “The VC pool is drying up out there. You can take a lot of meetings, but you won’t get many deal offerings. Most VCs are just servicing the companies they already have.”

Why am I talking so much about Dan Matlow and Medworxx? Well, “Matlow’s quest illustrates a unique situation that is affecting entrepreneurial companies in Ontario, and threatens to stall economic growth in the province’s industries of tomorrow—technology and other knowledge-based businesses,” according to Mr. Wanless in the *National Post*. “The private investment vertical has been hollowed out, almost stopped dead between the start-up and seed stage, and the higher publicly listing stages served by investment banks.”

The article says that, as we heard during Ms. MacLeod’s roundtable session, “This is partly because many

investors shied away from technology after the crash of 2001 and never came back, especially after traditional resource play investments began to boom again.”

By the way, I know my colleagues from northern Ontario and other parts of the province will be concerned. Take the mining sector, for example. Ontario has some of the most innovative, leading mining companies. We’re the mining capital of the world, or at least we have that potential. It’s been downgraded a bit in recent surveys by the Fraser Institute because of the government’s policies of raising taxes and hydro rates and such. The TSX is the main source of raising funding for mining plays. There’s enormous mineral potential, great innovators and entrepreneurs. The mining sector is not eligible under Bill 100.

There are those concerned about the forestry sector in the province of Ontario, which has hit very difficult times. The government has said that the forestry sector needs to be more innovative. That’s usually the line they use. The forestry sector, which has seen mills shut down and northern and rural communities decimated, is not eligible under the definition of Bill 100.

I say to my colleague from London–Fanshawe, because I know he’s concerned about this, Ontario’s second-largest industry is agriculture, the agri-food business, impacting on many, many ridings here in the province of Ontario, the backbone economically of ridings like my own in Niagara West–Glanbrook. The agriculture sector is not eligible under the narrow definitions of Bill 100. I know the Speaker will be concerned about that, and I hope he’ll speak with the finance minister and Minister of Research and Innovation about that, that the second-largest industry in Ontario, agriculture, is deemed by the government not to be innovative or creative enough. “You don’t need to apply for this fund.”

Mining, forestry left out; I hope the government will reconsider its very narrow definitions under Bill 100.

And back to Mr. Matlow. In 2006, according to the article, the Ontario government added to the problem; again, the problem is lack of investment, where you’re moving from entering the market and moving into bank investment: “The Ontario government added to the problem when it knocked out a strong underpinning to private investment by killing its participation in labour-sponsored investment fund tax credits. The system funnelled funds from ordinary investors to LSIFs by providing 15% federal tax credits and,” you’ll recall, “matching 15% provincial tax credits.”

When Minister Sorbara, in his 2004 or 2005 budget—anyway, one of his budgets—said that he was going to phase out the 15% tax credit, beginning in 2008, funding immediately dried up for most Ontario-based LSIFs, which meant there was a shrinking pool of capital to invest in companies that needed it.

Let me tell you what that meant. According to the article, the fallout of the McGuinty government’s decision was palpably illustrated “when the Canadian Venture Capital and Private Investment Association (CVCA) released its 2006 year-end results. LSVCCs raised \$907

million in 2006, down a full 25% from the previous year. And Quebec, which still has a tax credit system intact, accounted for about 85% of that fundraising. The article points out that the fundraising problem, because of the government's decision to phase out the tax credit for the LSIFs without an adequate replacement or other incentives for this type of venture capital investment, had ripple effects in the venture capital industry. "This is especially acute at the early stage of the financing chain that helps companies expand from start-up to maturity," which, I think, if I listened to my colleagues opposite, they said was the main purpose of Bill 100.

Here are the numbers. It's quite striking. In 2000, 283 new Ontario companies received \$1.6 billion in the early stage—called A-round—financing.

Let's pause for a second here. According to Ministry of Finance figures, read to the Legislature by my colleague from Beaches–East York earlier this morning, the tax benefit will probably be between \$5 million and \$7 million. In 2000, 283 new Ontario companies received \$1.6 billion in early-stage financing. So, "landmark cornerstone legislation"? Horse feathers.

Let's get back to the point. In 2000, 283 new Ontario companies received \$1.6 billion in early-stage financing. But last year—and for the sake of this article, it says 2006—"only 60 new companies received a mere \$120 million, less than 10% of the 2000 total," so a 90% drop in the venture capital invested in these types of firms.

That's the true nature of the problem. You heard the round table in Ottawa talking about the tech sector, we had a round table in Waterloo; we're expecting to hear debate during public consultations. The true nature of the problem is access to venture capital. No doubt there were concerns expressed about LSIFs, but the government sort of wantonly eliminated the tax benefit. Causing these types of ripple effects without an adequate replacement was a major error that has had impacts on these types of start-ups, as illustrated by Mr. Matlow and those like him.

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"According to Les Lyall, head of the Association of Labour Sponsored Investment Funds," these impacts have "slowed commercialization of promising technology, and left tech companies unable to expand. Already, he says, many young and educated people in the technology field are fleeing to the United States where they are receiving more encouragement to innovate." Here's the quote from Mr. Lyall, as I finish referring to this particular article: "In Ontario, the whole effort and initiative to commercialize has stopped because of financing problems. We're in a crisis"—a strong way to end the article.

Given the realities of the drop in investments in these types of start-ups, given the realities of young entrepreneurs heading to other provinces or across the border into the States, where there's a more positive environment for innovation and job creation, what did the McGuinty government do? It increased taxes on businesses to the point where, again according to Roger Martin,

C.D. Howe and others, Ontario now has the highest level of tax on new business investment in all of North America. There's a good way to punish entrepreneurs: Whack them with the highest level of taxation in competing jurisdictions.

The red tape that spools out of this government day after day after day is strangling entrepreneurs and innovators in the province of Ontario. Certainly, they're decisions that have led to higher prices in energy and other products. Particularly fuel and home heating will have an impact, no doubt. Despite early boasts of major investments in public infrastructure to support job creation, it's hard to think of a major project that people like Mr. Matlow will see as beneficial to creating jobs in the province of Ontario and supporting these young entrepreneurs.

The government basically has done everything to work against these types of businesses: higher taxes, higher utility rates, more red tape and rapid increases in government spending. Their approach under Bill 100 is to have an extremely narrowly defined benefit, where companies like those that I listed earlier on need not apply. Their approach has been to be very ideological, to say, "If you come from the private sector, you need not apply." Their approach has been so narrow in focus, in picking particular industries, that if you work, for example, in agriculture, if you work in mining, if you work in forestry, if you work in many aspects of manufacturing—which has seen some 200,000 jobs leave our province, including, sadly, many well-paying jobs at John Deere, in my colleague from Welland's riding, impacting also on many of my constituents—you need not apply. It's far from landmark or cornerstone legislation.

You know, I'm disappointed. When you hear the trumpets roaring on the other side of the Legislature about this bill in the short remarks at second reading, compared to what the bill actually contains, it's a far cry from the government's boasts.

As I said, we in the official opposition—and I'm very pleased to be sharing critic's responsibility on this with my colleague from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, Ms. Scott, who I think has been an outstanding critic on research and innovation. Working together, we will bring forward some amendments to this bill to broaden its impact, because I know my friend from Peterborough would probably object quite strongly, when he reads through this bill, to see that if it's a company that is doing an innovation in Peterborough for example, or an individual, maybe a former staffer, that the vast majority of those, representing some 98% of our GDP, would be deemed ineligible.

We're debating Bill 100 at a time when a recent report by Scotiabank says that Ontario is dead last in economic growth in Confederation, last in job creation. Other surveys that have come out from other banks put Ontario, if not last, second to last. Just this past week, TD Economics put out its report: Time for a Vision of Ontario's Economy—Much of the Foundation of Past Economic Success Has Crumbled. A very important part of the

report says, "Slowing economy no excuse for inaction." TD Economics goes on to say, "Tax cuts need to feature more prominently ... in the vision than they have in recent budgets ... the priority should become improving business and personal income-tax competitiveness." TD has other recommendations that I don't have the time to address in my remarks today, but they do start off by noting, "The Ontario economy is currently in its biggest funk since the early 1990s downturn...."

That's Dalton McGuinty's Ontario. Dalton McGuinty's Ontario is one that now sees more talented Ontarians leave to go to other provinces. It sees the flight of some 200,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs and brings forward Bill 100, which I hope we can improve with our amendments from the official opposition, but it's a far cry from making up for the high taxes, runaway spending and increased red tape this government has brought forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently for the entire hour to what my friend had to say, and I want to commend him for what I think was a well-reasoned, well-rounded speech and for raising the issue of financing, because I think the whole thing will come down to financing.

If this bill is going to work, and I would suggest that it does have some merit within the body of it, the government has to expand it, as my colleague from Niagara West—Glanbrook had to state. It needs to be expanded. To spend a paltry amount of money—\$5 million for this fiscal year and \$7 million for the next fiscal year, as the Ministry of Finance has stated is the intent of this bill—is not going to give true measure to it.

My friend also raised the whole issue—and I hope to be able to deal with this on the next date, when my turn to come to speak will be up—of venture capital. That is a problem, a far greater problem, in this province than is going to be resolved by this particular bill. Since 2001-02, the amount of venture capital in this province has dried up considerably; at first, because of the crisis that took place that year with the meltdown, but secondly, because policies and procedures within the Ministry of Finance have not been such that would allow for companies and for people who want to risk their funds to come forward.

Certainly, the whole issue about labour-sponsored investment funds needs to be carefully looked at. The government has indicated its desire to phase these out. This was one of the greatest venture capital pools possible. It's being phased out by 2010. I don't know where the government is coming from on this, when they want to invest only \$5 million or \$7 million, as my friend from Niagara West—Glanbrook had to state, but the reality is that, if we are going to use new technology to create jobs, there has to be capital for it. This bill is not the answer, although I really have no real problem with the bill. The real problem is venture capital.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I was listening carefully to the member from Niagara West—Glanbrook in detail. I know

he wasn't totally negative about the bill and thinks strongly that this bill is a very important bill for the province of Ontario, to allow many researchers and innovators to come to Ontario and launch their companies. He talked about the limitations of this bill, but this bill came as a complement for many different initiatives launched by the government last year. I want to remind the member from—

Mr. Michael Prue: It's a complement, not a cornerstone.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: It's a cornerstone for the purpose of inviting innovators and researchers to come and launch their companies in Ontario, when they give them a 10-year tax break. I think that's a very important issue.

Last year, I believe, our government launched a program they called the Next Generation of Jobs Fund. The member was talking about how come we don't support a private company or organization that wants to expand in Ontario. I know that many different companies in the province want to go to the Next Generation of Jobs Fund and apply for those funds if they want to update their equipment and turn it into a green technology. I think they'll be eligible for this one here. We have set aside almost \$1.2 billion. Also, when you apply for that fund, within 45 days you get the result. I think that's a very important initiative.

When we talk about Bill 100, I think the member opposite should remember exactly: We have to support Ontario and Canadian companies that want to launch in Ontario and want to patent their innovation and research in this province. We also don't want to give it to multi-billion dollar international companies that have a small branch in Ontario or in Canada. That's why we want to narrow the scope in order to support homegrown companies, innovators and researchers.

Also, we welcome anyone from across the globe who wants to come to this province and launch their ideas, because we believe strongly that this province will be the hub of research and innovation if we pass this bill because of the things that are cornerstones for many researchers and innovators.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I enjoyed the speech of my colleague the member from Niagara West—Glanbrook; it was most thoughtful.

What are we dealing with with this particular bill? I believe what we're dealing with is another smokescreen: \$7 million in tax cuts. We're talking about the Premier who will go down in history as the high-taxation Premier, the Premier who let in tax increases at one time greater than any other in history. He has spent billions in deficit since he was elected, combined with his higher taxes. So what all of a sudden is his interest in lowering taxes? Well, I believe it's a matter of a smokescreen.

First of all, he has the fairness campaign: Let's blame the feds. You know, sometimes Dalton McGuinty is like a jet engine; he really moves quickly. The big difference

is that when you turn off a jet engine, it stops whining. That's what we're getting from our Premier: Instead of action, we're getting whining.

Something has got to be done, because they know the deficit is now on the horizon. How do I know that? I'm not an economic expert. Dalton McGuinty's newsletter called the *Toronto Star* recently did an article on Mr. Maynard Keynes about how deficits are good. That's got to tell you something. They know a deficit is coming. It's that light in the tunnel coming toward us, and they're doing nothing about it. We are in big trouble, as a province. We are in grave trouble, and Dalton McGuinty is turning his back on the problem.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Pat Hoy: I'm pleased to join in this debate this morning.

What we're talking about here in Bill 100 is part of our five-point plan. It is to strengthen the environment of innovation, and this is one part of that.

The opposition has been remarking about \$5-million to \$7-million costs, and I want to remind persons in the Legislature and those who might be watching this debate that this is the Ontario tax exemption for commercialization and would involve an exemption on Ontario corporate income tax and corporate minimum tax for its first 10 years. So I don't think that we can reliably predict what the forgone revenues to the government would be 10 years from now. However, we are trying to point out to persons that there would be some initial cost or forgone revenues to the government. Perhaps that \$5 million or \$7 million is correct or perhaps it will exceed that by a greater amount.

I have the opportunity to talk to school-aged children often, and I talk about education being the key. It is the ticket to success in the modern world that we live in. To point this out to younger children who might be in grade 5 or less, I talk about something as simple as the television set that is in most of our homes. At one time, television was black and white, then came colour, then came remotes—we didn't have to get up and turn that channel; there were remotes involved—then came flat-screen televisions, then came plasma, then came high definition.

We don't know what innovation out there lies for the people of Ontario, but we have to be on the cutting edge of that innovation here in Ontario, and that's what this bill will help Ontario to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Niagara West—Glanbrook has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I thank my colleagues all for their comments. I say to my colleague from the Chatham-Kent area that—I mean, the working figures were given, so we have been given these figures from the Ministry of Finance of \$5 million to \$7 million. If it's more, then please have the ministry communicate to us what the benefit is going to be. Let me point out again that in 2000 the types of companies that this bill purports to help received some \$1.6 billion in early-stage financing, and

under the McGuinty government, by 2006, it had dropped by some 90% to about \$120 million. If it's \$5 million, \$7 million, \$10 million, \$14 million, that is still a far, far distance from the \$1.6 billion that had existed previously in 2000.

The crux of the problem is the access to venture capital for these firms. This bill is very narrowly defined. It only supports IP developed at government-approved institutions; it only impacts on about 2% of the value of GDP. Major sectors like agriculture, mining, forestry, the majority of manufacturing need not apply. I do question the ideological bent of the McGuinty government that is anti-private business under this legislation, that basically says that if you come from the private sector, if you come up with innovation on your own, or you come from an existing successful company and are bringing forward your own innovation, you need not apply. Only those that are approved by the government through a very thick red tape process would be deemed eligible. Successful Ontario companies like Sandvine, Metranome, Primal Fusion, Client Outlook and Covarity, among others, the types of companies that tech capital partners invest in, would not be eligible because of the extremely narrow and ideological focus.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for debate has ended.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a number of guests we would like to welcome to Queen's Park today.

On behalf of the member from Welland, in the west members' gallery, Denise Oertle from St. Gallen, Switzerland, and Reverend Maria Lallouet from the Hungarian Presbyterian Church in Welland: Welcome today.

On behalf of the member from London—Fanshawe, in the east members' gallery, we would like to welcome Paul and Deedee Ingram to Queen's Park today.

On behalf of page Scarlett Michael, in the public galleries today is Jane Michael, her mother. Welcome.

LEGISLATIVE SPRINKLERS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just wanted to let the members know that there were a number of inquiries that came to my office yesterday: In the middle of a rainstorm, people were querying as to why the sprinklers were running on the front lawn. I just wanted to let you know that they weren't running; they were being drained to be put to rest for the winter. We were not wasting water in the middle of a rainstorm, so anybody that had queries, and especially the media who were curious as well, that was what was being completed.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: There are a lot of tears around this place too, but I don't think you can do anything about that.

My question is for the Minister of Finance. Yesterday the Premier, in a scrum, made some disturbing comments, which I suspect he now regrets, when he said certain parts of our economy are gone, never to return. He effectively was the coroner issuing a death certificate for far too many families and communities who have lost jobs under your watch. For years now, the Premier has been telling Ontarians, "Don't worry; this too shall pass," and now he tells them, "Actually, you're dead in the water; no lifeguards in sight."

Minister, these are challenging times for Ontario. Do you share your Premier's fatalist view for the future?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Premier of Ontario has a plan that is designed to ensure Ontario has a better future. No Premier in the history of this province, I would argue, has done more in difficult circumstances to promote employment growth, to promote investment, to promote innovation, to promote better working relationships with other governments. There is no doubt that there are challenges in the economy, and every time a family loses its job, this government takes it very seriously.

We will continue to make investments in skills. We will continue to make investments in innovation. We will continue to invest in infrastructure. We will continue to work to build partnerships with all levels of government and the private sector. That's the plan that will see us through these difficult times, led by a Premier who cares as much as anyone could for the well-being of the men, women and families of this province.

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The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: That response will instill confidence—not.

With the United States heading for a recession, Ontario perhaps already in one, about 240,000 manufacturing jobs lost in the past four years, now is not the time for the Premier of Ontario to be waving the white flag. Ontarians are proud of their province and they want a leader to be courageous and inspirational in troubled times, not a complaining defeatist.

Minister, will your government finally listen to experts like TD Economics and include their recommendations and those of other experts and economists, recommendations you've blithely ignored for the past two years? Will you include those recommendations in your upcoming economic statement?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'll remind the member opposite that it was Jim Flaherty who advised people not to invest in Ontario, and that's a shameful thing to do—absolutely shameful—for a federal finance minister.

We routinely receive advice from economists, including Mr. Drummond, who has offered very good advice to this government on many occasions. His most recent report recommended a number of things and, by the way, I'll remind the member opposite, also congratulated this government for a number of initiatives it has taken and has endorsed this government's approach; that is, a multi-pronged approach. He called for skills training investment, infrastructure investment, targeted tax cuts.

Our government has laid out a plan that is working, recognizing that there continue to be challenges in the economy and there will always be more to do. Our government has the right plan. We'll continue to pursue it in the context of all the challenges in the world economy today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: This morning the Premier, apparently trying to justify his ill-considered remarks, said he was just being honest. I don't know how Liberals define "honest." We know keeping campaign promises doesn't fall under that definition. I guess telling a community like Goderich, which just lost 500 jobs with Volvo, that there's no hope is the Premier's idea of honest. I call it depressing defeatism, unbecoming a Premier of this great province. If you want to be honest, Minister, stand up today and admit that you're not up to the job, that your government policies over the past five years have weakened Ontario and placed our economy in jeopardy. Try that on for honesty.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I think the people of Ontario rather decidedly determined who wasn't up to the job, I would remind the member opposite. To the people of Goderich, this government will work with them. To those families at Volvo, we will continue to offer the services we've offered at every one of these. I'll remind the member opposite, this government is investing at Bruce Power, for instance. Thousands of jobs have been created there, the largest infrastructure project anywhere in this country.

There's no doubt that there are challenges. There's no doubt that jobs are being lost in certain sectors. In spite of your criticism of the Premier, I'll remind you what your own leader said in today's *Toronto Star*: "I think we do see that when plants close and equipment moves out that some of those particular jobs are not coming back." That's John Tory.

The people of Ontario have endorsed this government's plan through their votes—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Do you want to give me an extra supplementary, Speaker?

My question is to the Attorney General. As you know, this afternoon we'll be debating a Progressive Conservative motion calling for strengthening of young offenders

legislation. I'd like to give you a chance to clarify your position, because you can't seem to figure out where you stand on the federal government's new proposal to deal with youth crime. In one breath you say the feds have got it all wrong and then in the next breath you say they're not being tough enough. A straight answer would be appreciated here, Minister. Do you support amending the YCJA to allow judges to emphasize public safety and deterrence when dealing with older repeat and serious young offenders? Yes or no?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: It's unfortunate that the member opposite wishes to play politics with an issue that is very important for all Ontarians, and that's the safety of our communities. Our position throughout is that we should have a legislative and an enforcement approach that is as tough as it needs to be on those who pose risk to society—the greatest risk to our communities—and that we need to invest in the programs that will ensure, particularly for young people, that when they make that first non-violent entry into the criminal justice system, we have the supports to keep them out of justice for the rest of their lives.

Now the member wants me to comment on another Harper promise. I know I will have two more opportunities in the supplementaries to do that, and I look forward to it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I'm asking the minister to comment on a motion that's before the House today. Last week, in response to a question on youth crime from the member for Whitby—Oshawa, you said that you asked the federal government to bring in changes that would get tougher with youth who "posed the greatest risk." That's exactly the issue our motion addresses: improving the way the system deals with the most serious and repeat offenders.

Minister, we've recently experienced a wave of violent youth crime, even into our schools. We've heard your rhetoric. Now is the chance to walk the walk. Will you support our motion?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The member quite rightly outlines the problem. He wants me to comment on a promise by the Prime Minister, Mr. Harper, a promise by the Conservatives. Well, let's look at the risk of commenting on those promises, because let's see whether they delivered on previous promises.

First of all, they promised 2,500 police officers across Canada; just a couple of years ago they made that promise. How many have we got? Money for a thousand. For how long? Five years. A broken promise—so it's a bit risky commenting on that promise. They promised to deliver tougher youth legislation, and what did they deliver? They delivered amendments to the Youth Criminal Justice Act that didn't even comply with the recommendations made by the Nunn Commission in Nova Scotia. The promise missed the mark—big risk buying into Tory-Harper promises.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Bluster and baloney—a double-talk sandwich. We're talking about a motion before the House this afternoon, specifically tying in with comments you've made publicly. Out of one side of your mouth, for public consumption, you say you want tougher laws for youth posing the greatest risk to society, but when you're given the opportunity to put your money where your mouth is, the real Liberal apparently comes out—a false front, a sham. When it comes to taking real action against repeat, serious young offenders, you're missing in action. If that's not the case, stand up right here today and say that you will support our motion and that your colleagues will support our motion to do something really meaningful to impact youth crime in this province.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: So rather than a motion to comment on Tory-Harper promises that are going to be broken, how about the Leader of the Opposition and his party supporting our plan? First of all, ban handguns throughout the country. You don't need handguns. He talks about a risk of youth violence. Why would you want to put handguns in the hands of the youth of the province? Ban handguns. Stand up for the people of Ontario. How about more police officers on the street? We funded an extra thousand police officers on the street. Will he pick up the phone, call his buddy Mr. Harper and tell him to live up to the promise to put more police officers on the streets of our communities like London, like Toronto, like Ottawa and like Belleville to support real community safety? And will he call upon his chum Stockwell Day to improve border security so that smuggled guns don't get across the border in Ontario? Why won't you stand up for the people of Ontario?

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FEDERAL LIBERAL ELECTION PROMISES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Since the days of John Robarts, every Premier has run a fairness-for-Ontario campaign. On this side of the House, we agree that Ontario needs a federal partner on employment insurance and economic development—no question—but the Dion Liberals released a 76-page platform with not one mention of expanding employment insurance eligibility or introducing an economic development agency for hard-hit southern Ontario. Would the minister agree that the Dion Liberal platform will not deliver fairness for Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I remind the member opposite that Premier McGuinty wrote to the leaders of all the federal parties and asked them to respond by October 3. That is the day after tomorrow, I believe. We look forward to those responses from all of the party leaders and, indeed, from candidates throughout Ontario.

A number of our members today were out distributing Vote for Fairness Ontario brochures at subway stations here in Toronto. Signs will be going up in different ridings. I know I'm going to be putting one and my col-

league from Sudbury will be putting one on his front lawn.

We look forward to those written responses from all of the party leaders and for a realistic plan as to how they will address all the things they say they're going to do that won't harm the overall Canadian economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, despite your government's call for employment insurance fairness, the Dion Liberal proposal will only mean more EI unfairness for laid-off Ontarians, and despite this Liberal government's call for the creation of a southern Ontario economic development agency, the Dion Liberal platform will only mean more job losses in hard-hit manufacturing communities like Welland and your own community of Windsor. Only the federal NDP platform promises to help protect jobs and support unemployed workers. Since the minister has been highly critical of the Dion plan, when will he endorse Jack Layton and the NDP as the right choice for Windsor and all of Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The government of Ontario is committed in a non-partisan way to fairness for the province of Ontario. We have asked all the federal party leaders to respond. We have asked candidates across Ontario to respond to four specific issues. When we are in receipt of those responses, we will publish them. We will advise the people of Ontario. We will continue the campaign.

This is a serious issue. Whether you're talking about fairness in health transfers, employment insurance reform or equalization, it's about laying out a plan that's realistic and achievable and isn't just a bunch of promises to everybody with no plan to actually fund them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I agree it's a serious issue, but this government has written letters, created petitions and even has a fancy website. Now the party platforms are out, the Dion Liberals want a carbon tax that will hurt hard-working Ontarians. They have no job creation strategy and offer no help for the unemployed. Jack Layton and the NDP will expand EI eligibility and create a southern Ontario economic development agency.

Earlier this week, this minister dismissed the Dion carbon tax as a bad approach in tough economic times. Why won't he now dismiss the entire Dion Liberal platform as not delivering to Ontarians in these tough economic times?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What we can dismiss is Jack Layton's la-la land, tax-raising, job-killing plan for Ontario. Mr. Layton's \$51-billion plan will raise taxes on the very companies that we need to have investing in Ontario. Mr. Layton is prepared—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Hamilton East is not in his seat.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Layton has not laid out a plan. He's laid out a bunch of promises with no idea of how he could ever, ever possibly implement them.

It is incumbent in the debate for the leaders of all the federal parties to respond to Premier McGuinty's very reasoned, very pointed, very specific issues that are affecting the Ontario economy and that they explain it in a way that they can actually afford to pay for it. Mr. Layton's plan reminds me of the Agenda for People. That was something that was here—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Another question to the Minister of Finance. At the same time that Ontario's losing hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs, the world is witnessing one of the biggest financial crises in history. Despite the unprecedented nature of this crisis, your government insists on taking the same hands-off approach to the financial meltdown as it has in the manufacturing crisis. What is this government going to do to protect Ontarians' hard-earned savings?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member opposite has correctly pointed out that there are enormous challenges in liquidity in world financial markets. These challenges are impacting every western economy.

Ontario has some of the most aggressive legislation for the protection of pensions, for the protection of insurance and a number of other things. We have been in constant communication with the Securities and Exchange Commission, leading economists, to assure ourselves that our financial institutions continue to remain stable and are certainly much more stable than some institutions in the United States.

The member quite correctly points out that these events will impact on all of us. I think it's incumbent on all of us to continue to monitor this. We have been doing that. We've been making investments through our five-point plan and other areas to help address these challenges, and we'll continue to work with all members of this House as we address this world situation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'd also remind the minister that Ontario has the responsibility for securities regulation and we have oversight over the Ontario Securities Commission. Yesterday, my colleague Nickel Belt MPP France Gélinas did what the government should have done and insisted that the OSC officials appear immediately before the committee to discuss this financial crisis.

At a time when Ontarians' pocketbooks are hurting and they're worried about the security of their savings, why is this government sitting on its hands?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'd remind the member that the Securities Commission has oversight for the value of the shares and how they trade; it has no regulatory authority over liquidity in the banking markets.

I can tell the member that regular compliance audits in terms of securities disclosures have been done. The head of the Securities Commission tells me that our financial institutions, those for which we have oversight, remain in relatively strong shape compared to others.

So you can talk about that, I say to the member opposite, but it really has nothing to do with it. I would suggest that we take this issue a little more seriously instead of throwing up pieces of legislation that really have nothing to do with it. It's about liquidity in international markets. The Ontario Securities Commission has no ability to influence that, with respect.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, Ontarians have every right to expect that this government will use every tool at its disposal to protect jobs and hard-earned savings. While your government looks on from the sidelines and does nothing, New Democrats at both the federal and the provincial level have laid out effective jobs plans and taken action to ensure that our financial watchdogs explain what they're doing to protect hard-earned savings. When will this government stop engaging in diversions like the fairness for Ontario campaign and take real action to protect the jobs and savings of hard-working Ontarians?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I think Ontarians are looking to us for leadership, and that involves not using pieces of legislation that have no impact on that.

I think people are worried about their savings and their future and I think we shouldn't be exploiting that fear. I think we should be watching these situations carefully, relying on our regulators, who are very competent in their jurisdictions, who assure us and who publish reports annually around the challenges in the areas that they regulate, recognizing that there are roles for the federal government, provincial government, and local authorities in some instances.

These are very, very challenging times. We need a very calm and reasoned approach, and I think all of us should work together to try to reassure Ontarians and Canadians that we will get through these very difficult circumstances.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Yesterday morning, 500 good workers at the Volvo road grading plant in Goderich were told that their jobs were going or gone. After 50 years of success on the shores of Lake Huron, the company is consolidating its North American manufacturing base in a low-tax jurisdiction of Pennsylvania. It's a very sad time for Goderich. The plant was the town's top employer. Its workforce was 7% of the population.

I wonder if it could have been avoided. I wonder, if the government hadn't given away all its money to a select few, whether it might have had something left to offer Volvo before they decided on Pennsylvania. Well, it's too late now. Volvo is gone, and Goderich is decimated—just another 500 names to add to the list.

Minister, your government's economic policies have failed the people of Goderich. If you don't change course now, the bleeding will not stop. How many small towns

in Ontario must suffer like this before you realize that we are living in a—

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The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister of Finance?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: First of all, this government is very concerned about the families that are affected by this unfortunate decision. Our discussions with the company are based on a range of considerations that go beyond simply what you were talking about. We are making investments to help attract new investments. In fact, the Premier was at the expansion of the Honda plant just late last week. There's no doubt there are challenges in the manufacturing sector. I remind the member opposite that those challenges are being experienced in many jurisdictions, including most of our leading competitors. In fact, Ontario's manufacturing job loss has been substantially lower than that of some of our competitive jurisdictions. I would submit to the member opposite that, through the investments that we are making, we wish to continue to try to prevent this type of situation. We believe it requires a multi-pronged approach. We disagree with you, sir, that tax cuts in and of themselves will solve—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The minister has been giving the same answer so often, he is starting to believe it. The answer is simple; it's Economics 101. Businesses who are interested in long-term growth and stability will locate in low-cost jurisdictions. Don't take my word for it; take a former Minister of Finance's word for it: "People pay attention to the level of taxation in Ontario to make investment decisions as to whether they're going to invest in the province, and thereby create jobs and more economic prosperity. So the principle of a competitive tax system is right at the foundation of the work we do." That was Greg Sorbara on October 27, 2004.

Minister, it's time to listen to your colleagues. It's time to listen to the experts. It's time to listen to the business community. Will you give Ontario the competitive edge that it needs? Will you move towards making Ontario an attractive, low-cost jurisdiction?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have been reducing the corporate tax burden—a \$3-billion cut over four years.

Interjection.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member opposite says \$3 billion is a pittance. It's too bad you didn't have that much money for our schools and universities when you were here. We are going to continue to make the investments we've made, including targeted tax cuts to businesses. It's questionable whether a cut in general corporate taxes would even benefit these companies who aren't making money. Our approach is the right approach. It's an approach that is endorsed by economists. It says that you have to have a range of policies that respond to all of the challenges in an economy. With that, the people of Ontario can be assured that their government is working in their interest, and that is one of the reasons why we continue to attract new jobs, in spite of challenges in some companies in some sectors.

SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS UNIT

Mr. Peter Kormos: A question to the Attorney General: Provincial Ombudsman André Marin finds the province's special investigations unit to be toothless, timid, biased and ineffectual. When will the minister commit to implementing Marin's recommendations?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I would like to thank the member for the question. I recognize—we all recognize—as Ombudsman Marin did, that the SIU plays a very important function in our society. It is the only independent civilian oversight of police activities in Canada. Ombudsman Marin made some excellent recommendations as a result of his report, and we've already started work from the ministry perspective on those recommendations. I look forward to speaking in more detail on the supplementary, but let's be clear: The Ombudsman's recommendations that the investigative capacity be enhanced is the direction that we are going to go. The Ombudsman's recommendation that there be increased transparency—absolutely. The Ombudsman's recommendation that there be increased and enhanced accountability—absolutely. We look forward to working with the new director of the SIU and all community partners and police agencies to strengthen this very important institution.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Kormos: When the people don't have confidence in the SIU, they don't have confidence in the police. If they don't have confidence in the police, police officers and the public are all at risk. Ombudsman Marin made some very specific recommendations after some startling and shocking revelations. He said, "The SIU has become so timid and fearful in its watchdog role that police oversight has hit rock bottom in Ontario." Why won't this minister commit to implementing the Marin recommendations?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We are very thankful for the recommendations made by the Ombudsman and we are working very hard to make sure that his goal—all of our goal—of a strengthened SIU is achieved.

The community has received the report that was made public just yesterday. It's important in strengthening the SIU that we get good input from the community—from community agencies, from the police, from the honourable member, from all those who recognize, as the Ombudsman did, as we do, that this SIU, which is the only independent civilian agency for oversight in Canada, needs to be strengthened because it performs such an important function. We want to get it right, so we are going to take whatever time is required to make sure that we get it right.

PAN AMERICAN GAMES

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: My question is for the Minister of Health Promotion. Since April of last year we've heard much about the 2015 Pan American bid for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Held once every four years,

the games last came to Canada in 1999. Ontario is not the only player in the game. Caracas, Lima and Bogota may also put bids forward. The Pan American Sports Organization will choose the host city later this year and time is of the essence if Ontario is going to win these games.

I know we sat on pins and needles waiting for a consensus with the federal government, but in early August the federal government made a commitment to support the province of Ontario's 2015 Pan American bid for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Since that time, many municipalities, including those in Durham region, have shown keen interest in the bid. Would the minister give us an update on our bid?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I want to take this opportunity, first of all, to thank the member for Pickering-Scarborough East for his question. As many of you already know, the Pan American Games present a great opportunity for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and for all Ontarians to be part of what will be a historic achievement for the province of Ontario. As a great mind once said, "Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm."

I urge all members of the Legislature and the people of Ontario to throw their support behind the Premier, and the chair, David Peterson, who was appointed by the Premier on September 10, 2008. Just yesterday, Mr. Peterson nominated a key individual as the president and chief operating officer to oversee the bid—Ms. Jagoda Pike.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary? The member for Hamilton Mountain.

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: Hamiltonians are showing a keen interest in the games and are excited about the bid. Hamilton proudly hosted the first Commonwealth Games back in 1930. People in my community are hopeful that they will have the chance to showcase Hamilton to the world again in 2015. Mayor Eisenberger and others in Hamilton are ready to help Ontario any way they can. David Peterson has indicated that Hamilton will play a key role if Ontario wins the Pan Am Games.

Would the Minister of Health Promotion tell us how the 2015 Pan American bid will benefit Hamilton and the Greater Golden Horseshoe should we be successful? What would be the next steps in regard to the bid and when should we expect to know if we've won the bid?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I want to thank the member for Hamilton Mountain, who I must say is a great advocate for her community.

If the Toronto-Greater Golden Horseshoe bid is successful, it is projected to inject almost \$2 billion into the economy of Ontario, creating 17,000 jobs and attracting approximately 250,000 tourists. The 2015 Pan American Games would potentially inject a billion-dollar capital investment into sport and recreation, providing world-class facilities where our amateur athletes could train and compete, and would also leave a legacy of new and improved community facilities, permitting all Ontarians to lead healthy and active lives.

I congratulate the minister's staff for all the work they have done on this file.

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PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Minister of Finance: Minister, before the last election Dalton McGuinty cynically froze property assessments until after, conveniently, the election. Homeowners across Ontario are now opening their mailboxes and seeing a triple whammy of assessment increases. According to CAPTR, through a study by the Cushman and Wakefield LePage real estate firm, in areas like Toronto, Muskoka and Haliburton these increases could be up to 102% for a young family in Toronto or 154% for a widow living in Muskoka or Haliburton.

Minister, under your new scheme of assessments, exactly how many Ontario homeowners will be whacked with double- or triple-digit annual assessment increases?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I need to remind the people of Ontario that an assessment increase does not mean a tax increase, as much as the member may try to portray that. The average assessment increase across the province is 20%, and the member is aware of that. The member will be aware that within communities some assessments will go up and some will go down to reflect current value assessment. The phase-in of this is over four years, and we believe, contrary to the member's view, that that is the appropriate way to implement these assessment increases which do not necessarily lead to a tax increase.

The assessment announcements are being rolled out across the province.

I also remind the member that we responded in the affirmative to all the recommendations of the provincial Ombudsman on this issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The minister knows darn well that somebody facing annual double- or triple-digit assessment increases is going to get whacked badly by Dalton McGuinty's new assessment scheme. Think of that widow living in Binbrook, think of that young family living in Windsor, already dealing with Dalton McGuinty's new health tax, already dealing with higher hydro rates, already dealing with higher home heating costs and the cost of groceries. Now, under Dalton McGuinty's new assessment scheme, if you're one of those people who gets a triple-digit or high double-digit assessment increase—zap, you're frozen; you get no relief from higher property taxes until 2012. How can the minister stand in this place and say that they should be frozen until 2012 with higher property taxes?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The only thing that's whacked in this debate is the Tory policy on capping of assessments. I remind the member that, according to the Ottawa Citizen, "The Conservative plan is not intellectually sound.... The problem is that it doesn't meet the basic test of fairness." What it does, just so Ontarians understand—Mr. Hudak and John Tory want to raise property taxes for

modest-income people and lower them in the wealthiest neighbourhoods in the province. That's inconsistent. I'll remind the member opposite of what he himself said in the St. Catharines Standard on March 1, 2006: "Hudak acknowledged the problem is the unexpected result of the legislation he and his fellow Conservatives pushed through...."

We're fixing their problem, we're dealing with a whacked system—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The member from Hamilton Centre.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. Two days ago, our local health integration network rubber-stamped a controversial plan to close a hospital emergency department completely to adults in Hamilton without proper consultation and without any evidence to support the decision.

Stephen Birch, a respected LHIN board member, resigned in disgust over the board's flawed process that led to unwarranted approval of a Hamilton Health Sciences centre restructuring plan. He said that the LHIN's conduct highlights "the extreme lack of critical appraisal skills necessary to evaluate plans for major reallocations of health care service delivery and does not bode well for the future of health care in the HNHBB LHIN." What is the McGuinty government going to do now to ensure that the LHIN holds a full and proper community consultation before the plan becomes a done deal?

Hon. George Smitherman: I want to say on behalf of my colleague the Minister of Health that this is a process in the Hamilton community that, unlike many that have been involved in health care decisions before, has taken place in full public viewing and has been ongoing for a very long time. The member talks about flaws in process and the like, but I think we can all agree when there are alterations in health care delivery it's very hard to reach a consensus that everybody supports. But I think the member misunderstands that in the circumstances for Hamilton, pediatrics are called upon, that hospital at McMaster is called upon to support 600,000 children, and Hamilton will emerge with a children-only emergency room that I think many people in this country would see as a tremendous increase and improvement in the quality of health services in that community. And there are alternate services for emergency room purposes for those people in Hamilton. This is a tremendous advance for health care, particularly as it relates to vulnerable—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This government can try to dismiss the problem, but the reality is the city council, our paramedics, doctors, other health care professionals at the hospital and citizens who crammed into a protest rally last Thursday—of all of these people, virtually no

one wants the restructuring plan as it's been presented. But the LHIN, with the help of the McGuinty Liberals, is determined to ram it through against everyone's wishes. The LHIN has failed in its mandate to consult with the public and has approved a restructuring scheme without any evidence to support the proposed changes. There is no evidence that these changes are supportable and everyone is saying so. Will the McGuinty government come out of the shadows, quit hiding behind the LHIN, and give our Hamilton constituents the input, the consideration and the accountability that they deserve?

Hon. George Smitherman: It's too bad that the honourable member wasn't around in the day when hospitals were taking direct hits to their budget and there were actual cuts each and every year, because that is what her colleagues who sit beside her and around her could tell about from their long experience. The people of Hamilton have benefited from extraordinary investment in health care services and, Mr. Speaker, you will note—

Interjections.

Hon. George Smitherman: Mr Speaker, you will note that the member refuses to address on point the significant improvement associated with the opportunities for health care for children in the Hamilton community. She says that everybody is opposed to it, which she knows is not true. It's difficult to form a consensus when there's change in the delivery of health care, but this is health care change that's been widely consulted and is of absolute benefit, especially to the children of the Hamilton community.

AGGRESSIVE DRIVING

Mr. Pat Hoy: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. We have heard from police that aggressive driving is a major cause of injuries and deaths on our highways. In fact, earlier this year OPP Commissioner Julian Fantino was quoted as saying, "Crashes are often caused by motorists who drive aggressively, speed or make unsafe lane changes...." Commissioner Fantino also spoke about this serious issue during a visit to Chatham, where he received recognition from the Italian community about a year ago. I have also heard from the constituents of Chatham-Kent-Essex on this matter, as the once infamous stretch of Highway 401 known as Carnage Alley runs through my riding. I'm hoping that the Minister of Transportation can share with this House what he and his ministry are doing to combat this dangerous form of driving.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you for an excellent question. You will remember that in 2007, our government passed, along with the Legislature, Bill 203, the Safer Roads for a Safer Ontario Act. What it did was it provided police officers with additional tools needed to stop unsafe drivers. These are people speeding, cutting people off and involved in some kinds of stunts on public roads causing fatalities, serious injury and property damage.

As a result, the OPP has noted that the number of deaths since the passage of that on OPP-patrolled high-

ways is a 43.5% reduction, which is very substantial. This is a clear indication that the additional tough measures which were contained in that bill are working, such things as roadside suspensions, substantial fines and suspension of licences.

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The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Pat Hoy: Minister, I realize that our police officers are working hard every single day to patrol this province's roads in order to enforce the laws in place and to remind those on our roads of the importance of following those very rules. Although Bill 203 has introduced tougher penalties, and although we have seen decreases in fatalities on our roads, I'm still hearing from my constituents that aggressive driving is a problem.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, would the Minister of Transportation share with this House information on any further changes or initiatives that his ministry supports?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'd be happy to do that. All of us in this Legislature, and all of us as citizens of Ontario, can play a role in this regard.

I attended an event with the Association of Chiefs of Police and the Ontario Trucking Association and others. There's a new initiative that's being sponsored by the widow and the brother of a truck driver who was killed in such an accident. What they are advocating is that people identify dangerous drivers when they see them on the highway. If there's a passenger in the car, get them to make that 911 call; if you are a driver alone, pull over to the side safely, make that call and report them. There are decals that are out there on those trucks now, suggesting the numbers that can be called in that regard.

You'd be surprised what a difference it can make when we take the time, effort and energy to identify dangerous drivers and report them appropriately to the police. I think we'll see even further reductions in deaths and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. The member for Nepean-Carleton.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is for the Deputy Premier.

As the finance minister pointed out earlier today, the Premier's office has launched a PR campaign in Toronto at the subway stations, and right here at Queen's Park on the steps of the Legislature.

If I may, Mr. Speaker, this campaign literature was passed out earlier today. It's not on recycled paper, and nowhere on it does it indicate that it is paid for by the Ontario taxpayer.

Out of fairness to the opposition and to the taxpayers of Ontario, could the Deputy Premier provide this House with the public relations plan for the Premier's fairness campaign and its cost to the taxpayers, and have they registered this campaign with Elections Canada, as Premier Danny Williams did for Newfoundland?

Hon. George Smitherman: I want to thank the honourable member for her support for the campaign. The content of the very brochure which she has is aligned with the content of the resolution that was unanimously supported in this Legislature, and as such I think it's fair to say that it reflects the views of all members of the Legislature. It's certainly not an exercise in partisanship, and I think anyone reading the piece would conclude that as well.

The eventual cost of this, of course, can be publicly known, but first we want to give all members the opportunity to take advantage of these flyers, to have as many as they want in their communities, and to participate in distributing these across the breadth of the province of Ontario, along with lawn signs, which will help to focus this important issue of fairness in the context of the election soon to come.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's an opportunity, I guess, for all of us to show our pride in Ontario, but in fairness, Ontarians deserve to know how much the Premier is spending on his PR campaign with his website and this glossy pamphlet, this election-style flyer. Ontarians want fairness, not their tax dollars going to more spin doctors. Deputy Premier, is Bensimon Byrne, the infamous Liberal spinners who tinkered with our beloved trillium, responsible for this PR campaign?

Again I ask, how much money is it costing Ontario's taxpayers, and will the Deputy Premier share the PR plan with this Legislature for our taxpayers? And again I ask—you didn't answer this the first time—did you register this campaign with Elections Canada, as Premier Danny Williams did?

Hon. George Smitherman: There are quite a few questions there. Let's say, first off, on the issue with Danny Williams, you want to draw an apple-to-apple comparison, but he has said he's directed people how they should vote or not vote. That's a very substantial difference, and that brings in responsibilities for federal law.

Secondly, in-house resources are used to produce these materials, as mentioned to the honourable member. Of course, these very, very modest costs can be known once the total number of flyers etc. is known.

At the heart of it, what we encourage all members to do is participate in the opportunity to seek out the billions of dollars in disadvantage that Ontario is currently facing. I think everybody would agree that initiatives like this, which are a scant fraction of a penny on the dollar, are very, very good investments as we seek to gain, as the resolution unanimously supported in this Legislature the other day indicated, to receive the fairness that all Ontarians want to see in their relationship with the government of Canada.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is also to the Deputy Premier. A few weeks ago, at a meeting in my office in

Hamilton, two board members of the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant LHIN assured me that there would be full and open community consultations on all Hamilton health care issues that come before the board. Why did the LHIN make a decision on Monday afternoon in Grimsby to close the McMaster hospital emergency room before hearing from the affected greater Hamilton community members in Hamilton?

Hon. George Smitherman: I'm a little bit puzzled that a matter that was before the public in Hamilton for a year was not a satisfactory opportunity for the honourable member doing his job to feel like he sought the necessary engagement and voice of the people in his community. He says today there has been inadequate consultation on a matter that has been before the community for a year and has been the subject, I'm certain, of meetings in an extraordinary variety of forms.

Hamilton Health Sciences responded to some of the criticisms brought forward, and the urgent care clinic, which is going to substantially aid the people in west Hamilton and in the communities to the north, is one of the changes that we made in response to the criticisms of the community. I say to the honourable member, why is he opposed to Hamilton emergency with a stand-alone emergency room to benefit the children of Hamilton?

Mr. Paul Miller: An interesting reply from the minister, considering that 90% of his so-called meetings were behind closed doors and weren't for the public.

The Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant LHIN board is made up of members except for one now. That is Mr. Birch, who resigned yesterday and who lives in Hamilton, the largest community served by the LHIN—one member from Hamilton. LHINs were established to make decisions based on community needs. The LHIN has proven its inability to conduct even the most basic level of consultation with the community it is supposed to serve. In fact, the LHIN has proven itself so dysfunctional that its only Hamilton west board member resigned. When will this minister intervene, reverse the ill-advised decision to close the McMaster hospital emergency room, require a full community consultation on the question and review the overall functioning of the Hamilton LHIN?

Hon. George Smitherman: Difficult decisions have been made by people in important roles based on the advice and information from clinical leaders in the Hamilton community. It has been done only at the conclusion of an extensive process of consultations, and the member's characterization that those have been closed door is absurd. It's beyond the pale.

I'll quote from Dr. Salim Yusuf, professor of medicine at McMaster University: "In the end, it's the health of the people of Hamilton that matters. We can't hold that hostage to a gut reaction."

We recognize that these are emotional matters, but the member should not stand by while 1,800 children each year are shipped down the highway from Hamilton to Sick Children's. Instead, we're repatriating, to the benefit of the children of Hamilton, the services they need in

their community with a stand-alone emergency room at McMaster, which will stand—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just remind the member from Hamilton East to watch his language.

INVASIVE SPECIES

Mr. David Oraziatti: My question is for Minister of Natural Resources. Last week, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency confirmed the discovery of the emerald ash borer in Sault Ste. Marie. This is of great concern to my community as ash is the tree species planted all across our downtown and in many other parts of the city.

I know our government committed \$15 million toward the construction of a new invasive species research centre in my riding, and Sault Ste. Marie is home to the largest concentration of forest researchers in the country, making it a natural fit for this centre. However, my community is concerned that the project may never come to fruition because the federal government is not stepping up to the plate to take part in this important project. Have you contacted your counterparts in the federal government, and can you give us an update on the progress of this initiative?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I thank the member from Sault Ste. Marie for the question. Without doubt, we're very concerned about the emerald ash borer and any other invasive species. We are totally committed to following through with our commitment to the establishment of this centre, but there's no question that we can't do it alone. We need to work with the federal government. I have, in fact, written to both federal members. I have to say I'm very disappointed. I received a letter from the federal Minister of Agriculture, and I am going to quote. He has indicated here: "Issues of mutual concern, ranging from agricultural pests such as plum pox virus to forest concerns such as the emerald ash borer and Asian long-horned beetle have all been addressed." Obviously, he's on some other planet. So there's no question that we need to be able to pursue, significantly, an opportunity to work with the invasive species agency—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

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Mr. David Oraziatti: The destruction of ash trees caused by this pest have been quite significant in southern Ontario and through the northern United States. We know that invasive species are exacting a toll not only on our environment, but on our economy as well. Our forestry sector is already under pressure, and we can't afford to deal with any potential destruction of our forests. We already have witnessed the devastating effects the pine beetles had on the BC forestry sector. I realize that the federal government has the lead responsibility for addressing invasive species, but if they are not prepared to follow through on this important initiative,

we cannot sit idly by and allow our invasive species to continue taking a toll on our resources. Can you tell us what steps we're taking to address the challenges posed by the emerald ash borer?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I'd like to reiterate that one of the major challenges is that when an invasive species comes into this province or any province, the federal agency, which is governed by the federal government, has the responsibility. But once that particular species becomes a resident, they go like this and say, "It's yours." It's not the way to do business. We must change. We've made some investments. It's the same with the gypsy moth and with the dandelion, quite frankly, which is also an invasive species. We have given \$50,000 through a grant to an innovative company for a new product. We've put in \$650,000 with the Essex conservation authority to replant ash trees in that area and we've committed the \$15 million to support the establishment. But every year we have one new invasive species come in this province, and it's time we start working together to make a difference to stop this invasion.

C. DIFFICILE

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Between November 2004 and April 2005, the Public Health Agency of Canada conducted a national study of *C. difficile* that included 11 Ontario hospitals. The study revealed that Ontario had the second-highest rate of *C. difficile* deaths in Canada. By May 2006, you had the results of a surveillance study that showed that *C. difficile* was killing more Ontario patients than any other province except Quebec. In March 2004, you said, while discussing another important health concern, "Ontarians are smart people and deserve to know the facts." So I ask you today: Did you provide the facts? Did you make the results of the Public Health Agency of Canada study of *C. difficile* available to Ontario hospitals or the public?

Hon. George Smitherman: I want to thank the honourable member for her question. I think it actually confirms something that runs in extraordinary contrast to the questions of the critic for health from that party, where she pretends that no one has known about *C. difficile*, including in our hospitals, until just a few weeks or months ago. In fact, all the honourable member is doing is offering further evidence about the extent to which *C. difficile* is a recognized threat in hospital environments. That's why hospital leaders, administrative and front-line, have been working and taking steps to grapple with what undoubtedly is a very, very substantial challenge. This is part and parcel of a pattern that has been identified from our work with PIDAC, and the installation of infectious disease offers in our hospitals has been taken seriously. And a newer step has been added, which is public reporting of *C. difficile* rates in Ontario's hospitals.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Ms. Laurie Scott: It is clearly further evidence that your government did nothing while hundreds, if not thou-

sands, of people died. You didn't bring in the mandatory reporting at the time, in 2006, of either infection or death rates. You folded your arms. You left it for the hospitals to tackle the problem, despite the fact that there was evidence staring you, the government, in the face that screamed for mandatory reporting and surveillance. You ignored the evidence. You ignored the advice of the experts. As a result, I say again that hundreds, and possibly thousands, of people have died. Why was the public health agency's report buried by your government?

Hon. George Smitherman: The honourable member, in using language like that, offers no evidence of the case. Again, she's pretending that people have only in the last few months been alerted to the challenges associated with C. difficile, when this is a well-known health risk in hospital environments and that leaders in hospitals have been working on for years. They have been working on it with extraordinarily able guidance from the Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee, armed with a greater degree of resources because of the investments that the government made in the installation of infectious disease professionals in hospitals and the doubling of funding for public health. It is suspicious that an honourable member, part of a party that has a legacy of literally having turned its back on public health, stands in the House today, only having recently been alerted to C. difficile, to run down the efforts of those on the front lines of health care who have been grappling with his challenge for years.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines. Today, ONTC's major bus service cuts go into effect. The Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities passed a resolution calling on Ontario Northland to cancel these scheduled cuts and ask that the government intervene. Will the minister intervene and put the brakes on these service cuts?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you very much to the member for the question. Certainly, the services of the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission are very, very important. We know how significant they are in northern Ontario and we're very committed to that—last year, \$46 million in support from provincial government, from our ministry, to do that. But as the member knows, the bus service is a commercial enterprise, not part of a subsidy that is provided by the province. We are certainly conscious of the challenges that are being faced with increased fuel costs and other increases that have resulted in some really tough decisions that have to be made by the ONTC.

I don't think it's appropriate for me to be interfering with the decisions being made on a commercial service such as the ONTC. I'm pleased that indeed they are maintaining service to all of the communities; although clearly it is going to be an inconvenience to reduce those

services, it's very important that we maintain the services to those communities.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Well, we agree on one thing, that the service of the ONTC is very important to the people of the north. When we talk about service cuts, we're not talking about subways that come every four minutes or 15 minutes; we're talking about buses that used to come three times a week to a community that will now not come at all or come once a week to these communities. Those are drastic cuts. It also makes it hard because the rest of the system doesn't function. You can't have your transfer to go from Timmins to Thunder Bay anymore; you're going to have to come down south. The west transfer on Highway 11 is not working anymore with those cuts.

The cuts will also bring down ridership, because as those services are less appropriate, the ridership will go down. Environmentally, it will make more pollution in the north. We ask the ministry—I've written a letter; the municipality has written to you. You can act and stop the service cuts from going ahead. Will you do it?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you again for the question. Certainly, we are very conscious of the important services that the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission provides, and we're very proud of the fact there are 1,000 people who are working for the ONTC in northern Ontario. Again, we are very conscious of the importance of the bus service, but as a commercial enterprise, one where there are real challenges in terms of costs—certainly, the board made some very difficult decisions. Again, I'm certainly conscious of the inconveniences that will happen as a result of some of these adjustments, but importantly, no community will be without service; that will continue. There will be no layoffs as a result of that. I am conscious of how important the ONTC is to all people in northern Ontario, and it certainly is to our government as well.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just want to take this opportunity to welcome in the east members' gallery my good friend Madam Zhu Taoying, the consul general from China. I welcome her to Queen's Park along with her spouse, Huo Mingwu; also three deputy consul generals, Hao Guangfeng, Lu Kun and Li Zhengming, all deputy consul generals from China. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

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PETITIONS

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition from the good people at Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital.

"Whereas the current Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital is fully utilized; and

"Whereas Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital was sized to serve a town of Oakville population of 130,000, and the current population is now well over 170,000; and

"Whereas the population of Oakville continues to grow as mandated by 'Places to Grow,' an act of the Ontario Legislature, and is projected to be 187,500 in 2012, the completion date for a new facility in the original time frame; and

"Whereas residents of the town of Oakville are entitled to the same quality of health care as all Ontarians; and

"Whereas hospital facilities in the surrounding area do not have capacity to absorb Oakville's overflow needs;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure take the necessary steps to ensure the new Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital be completed under its original timelines without further delay."

I am pleased to add my name to the signatures and pass it to page Scarlett.

TAXATION

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition which was sent to me by Bob Callahan, city councillor for wards 3 and 4, city of Brampton, and John Sanderson, regional councillor for wards 3 and 4, city of Brampton. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas many seniors are on a fixed income; and

"Whereas they have paid school taxes for the years before they become seniors; and

"Whereas tax increases are made up of regional, city and school board levies;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature to pass legislation reducing the liability of seniors for school taxes by the percentage of increase in the municipal tax levy in each year."

I would affix my signature thereto.

INTERNET ACCESS

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: J'ai une pétition ici que j'ai reçue de Denise Régimbal portant 150 signatures du secteur rural de la municipalité.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we request high-speed Internet for rural connection for Alfred-Plantagenet and the surrounding rural region of Glengarry-Prescott-Russell;

"Whereas broadband capability will allow rural businesses to grow and compete in markets across the country and around the world, which will benefit the entire community;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and request high-speed Internet for rural connections for Alfred-Plantagenet."

I gladly add my signature to it.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Mr. Robert Bailey: I have a petition from my residents.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government has ruled against performing a more intense 'bumped-up' environmental assessment for their planned expansion of westbound Highway 402 lanes from two to four to accommodate more trucks;

"Whereas the trucks will be concentrated into an area that is totally within the city limits and in close proximity to many homes, high-density apartments...;

"Whereas recent air quality studies suggesting Sarnia has lower than average air quality on many days of the year...;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reconsider its decision in this matter and perform the bumped-up assessment, which will provide a more detailed risk analysis, as well as updated traffic counts, which we believe will place the viability of the lane expansion in doubt."

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I am pleased to acknowledge a submission from some of the doctors at Credit Valley Hospital with this petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I am pleased to sign and support this petition and to ask page Karlie to carry it for me.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: "Whereas the Milton District Hospital was designed to serve a population of 30,000

people and the town of Milton is now home to more than 69,000 people and is still growing rapidly; and

"Whereas the town of Milton is the fastest-growing town in Canada and was forced into that rate of growth by an act of the Ontario Legislature called 'Places to Grow'; and

"Whereas the town of Milton is projected to have a population of 101,600 people in 2014, which is the earliest date an expansion could be completed; and

"Whereas the current Milton facility is too small to accommodate Milton's explosive growth and parts of the hospital prohibit the integration of new outpatient clinics and diagnostic technologies;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure take the necessary steps to ensure timely approval and construction of the expansion to the Milton District Hospital."

I agree with this petition. I sign my name and I pass it to page Michael R.

GUN CONTROL

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today on behalf of the member for Scarborough Southwest.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas access to guns is a major cause behind an increase in violent crime;

"Whereas such crime has been steadily increasing over a number of years;

"Whereas current preventative initiatives have been put in place to stem the tide of violent crime but a direct approach targeting gun usage has not been undertaken;

"Whereas signs specifically stating a zero tolerance attitude toward gun use in the commission of gun violence need to be created and erected to demonstrate our collective disdain for this type of activity;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Public Safety to implement an initiative to construct a zero tolerance gun usage sign and have these signs placed on all province of Ontario property, such as major roads and buildings."

I will attach my signature to this petition and give it to page Marissa.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Provincial Animal Welfare Act calls for the Ontario SPCA, a private charity, whose objective is to facilitate and provide for the prevention of cruelty to animals and their protection and relief therefrom;

"Whereas every inspector and agent hired and trained by this private charity has and may exercise any of the powers of a police officer; and

"Whereas this private charity does not answer to the Ombudsman or the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, the Ontario SPCA is not subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and no external mechanism of accountability exists; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government refused to investigate the desperate plea of 29 resigned directors demanding that the Ontario SPCA be stripped of its police powers" in May 2006;

"Whereas the McGuinty government proposed sweeping reforms to the Provincial Animal Welfare Act granting further extraordinary powers to the Ontario SPCA, including the power of warrantless entry;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) that the Legislative Assembly direct the provincial government to investigate allegations of abuse of police powers and charter violations by the Ontario SPCA investigators; and

"(2) that the Legislative Assembly direct the provincial government to explore the need for an external mechanism of accountability for the Ontario SPCA; and

"(3) that the Legislative Assembly direct the provincial government to ensure that proposed changes to the Provincial Animal Welfare Act do not violate the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms."

Thank you, and I've signed this.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Joe Dickson: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Rouge Valley Health board reversed the 2006 announcement closing the maternity and pediatric services at the Ajax-Pickering hospital due to an overwhelming public outcry; and

"Whereas the Rouge Valley Health board of directors has recently approved closing the 20-bed mental health patient unit at the Ajax-Pickering hospital; and

"Whereas there remains further concern by residents for future maternity/pediatric closings, particularly with the new birthing unit at Centenary hospital, which will see 16 new labour, delivery, recovery and postpartum (LDRP) birthing rooms and an additional 21 postpartum rooms opening this fall in 2008, even with the Ontario Ministry of Health's largest-ever expansion of the Ajax-Pickering hospital ever; and

"Whereas there is a natural boundary, the Rouge Valley, that clearly separates the two distinct areas of Scarborough and Durham region;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Central East Local Health Integration Network (CE-LHIN) and the Rouge Valley Health System (RVHS) board of directors review the Rouge Valley Health System makeup and group Scarborough Centenary hospital with the three other Scarborough hospitals; and

"Further, that we position Ajax-Pickering hospital within Lakeridge Health, thus combining all of our hospitals in Durham region under one Durham region administration."

I attach my signature to it and pass it to Matthew.

STROKE THERAPY

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas there is a complete lack of government-funded outpatient therapy for stroke victims upon discharge from hospital in the city of Cambridge; and

"Whereas, on October 29, 2004, a state-of-the-art, government-funded outpatient day hospital program, which included therapy programs for stroke survivors discharged from hospital, was cut by the Cambridge Memorial Hospital due to the lack of provincial funds;

"We, the undersigned stroke victims, caregivers, family members and friends of stroke survivors in Cambridge draw your attention to the following:

"That the absence of a government-funded outpatient therapy program leaves many stroke survivors who are unable to pay for private therapy with a gap in services. As a result of this lack of therapy, many survivors despair and regress;

"That therapy is critical to restoring a survivor's ability to function and become rehabilitated and reintegrated into the community as opposed to being forced to enter a long-term-care facility, thus saving the system money while greatly improving the quality of life of stroke survivors and their families;

"That outpatient therapy is relatively inexpensive. A full-time physiotherapist, occupational therapist and a half-time speech pathologist and social worker required to deliver the service cost less per day than one bed in the hospital;

"Therefore we request that the Ontario government give priority to restoring a government-funded outpatient therapy program in Cambridge to provide desperately needed rehabilitation for stroke survivors and others with similar needs after discharge from hospital."

As I agree with the contents of this petition, I affix my name thereto.

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. Bob Delaney: I may actually get the last word in today. I'm pleased to join with my colleague from Newmarket-Aurora in this particular petition to the Parliament of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the legacy of Pope John Paul II reflects his lifelong commitment to international understanding, peace and the defence of equality and human rights;

"Whereas his legacy has an all-embracing meaning that is particularly relevant to Canada's multi-faith and multicultural traditions;

"Whereas, as one of the great spiritual leaders of contemporary times, Pope John Paul II visited Ontario dur-

ing his pontificate of more than 25 years and, on his visits, was enthusiastically greeted by Ontario's diverse religious and cultural communities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to grant speedy passage into law of the private member's bill entitled An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day."

I'm pleased to sign this petition and send it with page Tamika.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I hate to give the last word to Mississauga. I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the skyrocketing price of gasoline is causing hardship to families across Ontario; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government charges a gasoline tax of 14.7 cents per litre to drivers in all parts of Ontario; and

"Whereas gasoline tax revenues now go exclusively to big cities with transit systems, while roads and bridges crumble in other communities across Ontario; and

"Whereas residents of Bruce-Grey have been shut out of provincial gasoline tax revenues to which they have contributed; and

"Whereas whatever one-time money that has flowed to municipalities from the McGuinty Liberal government has been neither stable nor predictable, and has been insufficient to meet our infrastructure needs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to redistribute provincial gasoline tax revenues fairly to all communities across the province."

I agree with this and have signed it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It appearing that there be no further petitions, this House stands recessed until 3 o'clock this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1203 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DAY OF GERMAN UNITY

Mr. Frank Klees: As a proud German Canadian, I rise to pay tribute to the Day of German Unity or Tag der Deutschen Einheit, which commemorates the reunion of East and West Germany on October 3, 1990.

German reunification became a reality after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the very symbol of the Iron Curtain, in November 1989.

On August 23, 1990, the new Parliament of East Germany voted to approve a session with West Germany and, on October 3, 1990, the two countries officially became the unified Federal Republic of Germany. That evening, the unity flag was raised over the Platz der Republik. The six-by-10 metre flag is the largest official

flag in Germany and has flown day and night since it was first raised.

I'm proud to say that Canadians of German origin have been an integral part of the establishment and ongoing development of the province of Ontario since the 18th century. More than 70% of the population of our province at that time was comprised of citizens of German background. This is especially reflected in the fact that on July 24, 1788, King George III, by royal proclamation, named the early districts of Ontario after Lunenburg, Mecklenburgh, Nassau and Hesse. Canadians of German origin are truly among the first founders of Ontario.

On behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Consul General of the Federal Republic of Germany, Mr. Holger Raasch, and Mrs. Jacqueline Raasch and our entire German Canadian community on Germany's national unity day.

CITY OF BRAMPTON

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I rise today to congratulate Brampton on becoming not only Canada's Flower City but also the world's Flower City 2008.

Recently, Brampton learned it had won the Communities in Bloom International Competition. It's the second year Brampton has competed internationally, after winning the national title in 2006. The award recognizes civic pride, environmental responsibility and community beautification.

Judges use eight criteria in evaluating municipalities from the United States, Ireland, England, Scotland and Japan. They looked at tidiness, environmental awareness, community involvement, heritage conservation, urban forest management, landscaped areas, and turf and ground covers. The judges made special mention of the extent of the urban forest coverage as seen from a helicopter that flew the judges over the city. Brampton won in the largest population category, while Stratford, Ontario, won in the medium category.

"Communities in Bloom is not just about flowers and beauty, it is about community spirit and civic pride," said Carole Spraggett, community chair of the Brampton Communities in Bloom committee. "There was special mention for the front garden recognition program, which is particularly gratifying as this is volunteer-driven. The citizens in Brampton play a very important role in making our city a great place through their involvement in projects that not only beautify our surroundings but also add to our quality of life."

EID-UL-FITR

Mr. Ted Arnott: Mr. Speaker, Salaam Aleikum. Today is the Muslim holy day of Eid-ul-Fitr, the breaking of the fast of the month of Ramadan.

Earlier today, thousands of Muslims gathered at the Rogers Centre to mark this auspicious day, and my col-

league the member for Newmarket-Aurora was present on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus.

This is a day of joyful feasting and family togetherness for all Muslims, who gather at their mosques for special prayers of thanksgiving, extolling God as the greatest for allowing them to complete the Ramadan fast to His Glory.

Muslim families also visit cemeteries today, for on this day not even death can separate family members from one another.

On behalf of John Tory and all the members of the Ontario PC caucus, I want to extend my warmest best wishes to our Muslim Canadian community at this special and holy time for them and for the worldwide Muslim family.

Eid Mubarak.

GLOBAL EDUCATION INITIATIVE

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to share a project that has been sent to me by Rashin Alizadeh. It reads as follows:

"The Global Education Initiative"—which is the project that I was talking about—"is a series of related projects which aim to bring ... awareness to high school students, and to encourage them to develop an interest in the globe and humanity during the critical teenage years when their core identity is being shaped. The project has been endorsed by Global Aware, a non-governmental organization whose sole purpose is 'raising awareness of social and environmental justice issues.' The first phase of the project is on its way but current tasks include meeting with education officials to raise publicity and raising funds to support the project.

"Global Education Initiative is going to start phase one of four within high schools, initially those belonging to the Toronto District School Board. The organization's goal is to bring awareness about the world we live in to youth through presentations by students with international experience. The second part of the project is to use the aid of movies to help the audience relate to the stories and realities outside their own world. The third phase is to allow the students to have an impact. The students will be given opportunities to raise funds and contribute to such things as building a library, establishing a women's shelter, supporting a family business or a student through university. The last phase of the initiative is to change the school curriculum in a way that would allow students to learn more about the world in which we live in."

I'm going to meet with her. It's a wonderful project. Anyone who is hearing about this and would like to support me and her, please let me know.

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: On October 1, 59 years ago, an important event took place in the history of mankind: the founding of the People's Republic of China. The national

day is celebrated throughout mainland China, Hong Kong and Macau with a variety of government-organized festivities, including fireworks and concerts. Public places such as Tiananmen Square in Beijing are decorated in a festive theme and portraits of revered leaders such as Sun Yat-sen are publicly displayed.

Today, we in Canada, too, show our deep respect for the people of China by raising its national colours right here in front of this Legislature in the presence of Madam Zhu Taoying, consul general; Mr. Huo Mingwu, consul and spouse of the consul general; Mr. Hao Guangfeng, deputy consul general; Mr. Lu Kun, deputy consul general; Mr. Li Zhengming, deputy consul general; Mr. Ping Tan, president of the National Congress of Chinese Canadians; and Mr. Hughes Eng, vice-chair of the Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto.

We are mindful of the contributions that Chinese-Canadians have made in the development of Canada and the many sacrifices they have endured. But Canadians, too, made sacrifices for China.

When I was in China, I was surprised to find that every Chinese school kid knew about a Canadian named Norman Bethune, who, of course, was our famous physician. He ultimately sacrificed his life in the service of others in the very tumultuous time of China's civil war.

May the cordial relationship between the People's Republic of China and Canada prosper and grow in the years to come.

I want to thank each member who participated today in the flag-raising ceremony because, for the People's Republic of China's representatives at this event—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you to the honourable member.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: During the summer recess, I had the opportunity to visit a number of long-term-care facilities where many issues relating to a shocking lack of provincial funding came to my attention. There were two common themes that were glaringly apparent: First, Dalton McGuinty has ignored the funding needs of these homes and, therefore, the well-being of the staff and residents; and second, these homes are staffed by hard-working, caring and committed professionals who are grossly underpaid and unrecognized when compared with their peers who work in acute care facilities.

The underfunding of this province's long-term-care facilities is often not something the loved ones of the residents are aware of. This leads to unrealistic and unreasonable expectations placed on the staff of the long-term-care facilities, who are working as hard as possible to keep up with the demands of their jobs.

We constantly hear of the need for more funding and the problems experienced by those who live in long-term-care facilities. What does not make the headlines is the fact that underfunding is leading to the physical and verbal abuse of the dedicated men and women who work on the front lines of our long-term-care facilities. For

many of them, whose stories go untold, a lack of funding from Dalton McGuinty and unreasonable expectations are leading to physical, emotional and psychological abuse.

My observations are reinforced by a York University study that found that a staggering number of long-term-care workers suffer violence on the job.

1510

It is time for Dalton McGuinty to stop turning a blind eye and take care of the needs of the men and women working in our long-term-care facilities. The time to invest in our long-term-care facilities is now. Give these facilities the resources they so desperately need—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

WINTER COATS FOR CHILDREN PROJECT

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Today I rise before this House to recognize the community efforts of Winter Coats for Children. This community organization consists of volunteers whose goal is to ensure that each child has a winter coat and winter boots.

In particular, I would like to congratulate Jo-Ann Studholme, Mary Tobin, Lise Wiseman, Joe Long, Stephanie Gemmell and Bill Studholme. These six volunteers spend countless hours finding winter coats and winter boots for needy children. Last year, this community group helped hundreds of coats find good homes. They have assured me that they will continue to work tirelessly to continue this effort.

This is not a group that receives a lot of funding. They manage to keep going with the bare minimum of funds. This is a community effort, where the people of Brampton West have opened their hearts and closets to make this commitment to needy children. This community group does not have permanent space; they rely on the kindness of local churches which lend them space to continue this worthy cause. More recently, Winter Coats for Children lost their space and were lent temporary space through Ontario Works.

Regardless of how small the space they have to work in, they continue to volunteer with a smile on their face because they can see the positive difference a winter coat has on a child. I was told the story of a young girl who outgrew her coat and, instead of throwing it away, wanted to make sure it was passed on to someone who needed it.

Once again, I want to congratulate these great folks and this organization, and I would encourage them to keep up the good work.

KOFFLER SCIENTIFIC RESERVE

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I rise to speak of an extremely valuable resource in my riding of Oak Ridges-Markham which I had the pleasure of visiting this summer. The Koffler Scientific Reserve at Jokers Hill is a biological

field station which is owned and operated by the University of Toronto and directed by Dr. Arthur Weis.

Generously donated by the Koffler family to the university in 1995, the reserve is situated on 880 acres of fields, wetlands, grasslands and forest in the township of King, on the Oak Ridges moraine. It provides facilities and services for ecological, evolutionary and environmental research. Since field research started in 1997, more than 35 studies done at the site have been published in the most respected journals of ecology and evolutionary biology. Thirteen Ph.D. and 22 master of science students have completed all or part of their thesis research at the site, which also hosts three residential undergraduate field courses: experimental ecology, field botany, and small-mammal ecology.

This year saw the beginnings of a significant expansion of community outreach and public education, including guided nature walks, initiatives to support elementary and secondary school teachers, and the development of two interpretive trails featuring forest health.

I applaud all those who have made the University of Toronto's Koffler Scientific Reserve at Jokers Hill an important hub for ecological and scientific research in Ontario.

EID-UL-FITR

Mr. Reza Moridi: Today is Eid-Ul-Fitr, and it is with great honour that I speak about a Muslim holiday that marks the end of Ramadan, the Islamic holy month of fasting.

"Eid" is an Arabic word meaning "festivity," while "Fitr" means "to break the fast." The common greeting during Eid-Ul-Fitr are the Arabic words "Eid Mubarak," which mean "Blessed be." However, many Muslim countries have their own greetings, based on local languages and traditions.

On the Eid day, typically, Muslims will wake up early in the morning and are encouraged to dress in their best clothes and attend a special Eid prayer that is performed in congregation at mosques or in open areas like fields or squares.

This morning I had the honour to participate in the Eid prayer with the Premier, held at the Rogers Centre, along with thousands of Canadian Muslims.

On the Eid day, Muslims show their appreciation for the health, strength and opportunities of life which God has given to them to fulfill their obligation of fasting and other good deeds during the blessed month of Ramadan.

Thank you, and Eid Mubarak.

USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES IN HOUSE

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Just to remind the members with BlackBerries, which you often carry with you: If you know you are going to be speaking, put the BlackBerry under your desk or someplace else. The

vibrations from your BlackBerry wreak havoc on our interpreters' ears. You can actually hear it. Many of you will be up speaking and your BlackBerries will be going off, and you can hear that hum going around. So I just remind members, from a perspective of the health and safety of our interpreters, to please refrain from having your BlackBerries on your desks when you are speaking.

The member from Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: It would be a simple enough matter for you to merely ban BlackBerries from the chamber, and then we wouldn't have that problem.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Regarding the issue of BlackBerries, I would welcome the honourable member, who is the House leader for the third party, that this may very well be a topic of discussion for a House leaders' meeting, and I would welcome the consensus that has developed among all three parties to help guide the Speaker on the future use of BlackBerries.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Nepean—Carleton has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Deputy Premier concerning the government's fairness campaign. This matter will be debated today at 5:45 p.m.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 97(c), changes have been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. McNeely assumes ballot item number 43, Mr. Mauro assumes ballot item number 56, Mr. Sergio assumes ballot item number 46 and Mr. Berardinetti assumes ballot item number 70.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SMALL BUSINESS

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I rise in the House today to talk about the economic contributions of small and medium enterprises in Ontario. As most of you know, October is Salute to Small Business Month in Ontario, a chance for us to celebrate the significant contributions Ontario's entrepreneurs make to our economy and society.

Small and medium-sized businesses are the cornerstone of our economy, accounting for 99% of all businesses in this province. That means that 99% of Ontario's firms that employ 500 or fewer employees account for some 360,000 businesses in Ontario. Collectively they contribute over \$250 billion annually to our economy. Their importance to Ontario's economy cannot be overstated.

Their hard work, resiliency and strength contribute to the prosperity of all Ontarians through economic growth and job creation. Small businesses also play an essential role in the health of the global economy, the creation of jobs and the next generation of new ideas. That is why the government of Ontario pays tribute to the outstanding contributions made by our small businesses during Salute to Small Business Month; yet their efforts are felt year-round.

I would like to share with the House some examples of success stories. You have all heard about the Nano, the world's cheapest car. Did you know that there is a local Ontario connection with the Nano? Samco Machinery, based in Scarborough, Ontario, won a contract to produce machinery that makes parts for the Nano. I had the privilege of touring Samco's facility, and it reminded me once again of the importance of going global.

1520

Cervélo Cycle is another great example. Founded in Toronto in 1995, Cervélo has grown to be the largest time-trial bike manufacturer in the world. Simon Whitfield won a silver medal for Canada in the men's triathlon at the Beijing Olympics on a Cervélo bike. We should all be very proud of their contribution to this as well.

Right in Mississauga, 2Source Manufacturing Inc., a growing leading supplier of high-precision bushings to the aircraft industry around the world, is another home-grown success story. Ontario has invested \$5.13 million through our advanced manufacturing investment strategy program to help Mississauga-based 2Source Manufacturing Inc. to continue improving its manufacturing technologies, carry out innovative product development and create new jobs.

We recognize that small businesses need support so they can grow and adapt to the changing business climate and help our economy prosper, particularly in these challenging times.

My ministry is taking steps to ensure that Ontario's entrepreneurial spirit continues to drive our economy forward on the world stage. With the help of our partners, we have done some exciting things to aid small business. We must ensure that we continue to support our small and medium enterprises, and we did exactly that in the 2008 budget by providing funding for a program that will greatly benefit our SMEs in taking their business global. Earlier this year we announced \$5 million to fund export market access, a program designed to help our small and medium enterprises to take their businesses global.

Our government continues to support and stand up for Ontario manufacturers as they face economic challenges. To further advance the benefits leveraged through the advanced manufacturing investment strategy, which we call AMIS, we have lowered the investment project size threshold for loan applications to a minimum of \$10 million and 50 jobs created or retained. These investments will increase access to more projects from small and medium-sized manufacturers in Ontario and this is already happening.

We are also moving aggressively to reduce the regulatory burden on our businesses. The Ontario government has listened to the business community and we have been working hard to reduce the paper burden on businesses. After phase 1 of the paper burden reduction initiative, we were able to remove 24% of the business forms across seven key ministries that we worked on. After phase 2, we were able to eliminate another 25% of business forms in another eight ministries. Moving forward, phase 3 is currently underway with the remaining ministries so that the businesses can focus on growing their businesses rather than filling out forms for the government.

We also eliminated the capital tax retroactive to January 1, 2007, for businesses primarily engaged in manufacturing and resource activities, which would entitle them to about \$190 million in rebates, and some of those cheques have already gone out.

We have also accelerated the capital cost allowance rate for manufacturing and processing machinery and equipment investments made before 2012. These measures are being paralleled to the measures that were announced in the 2008 federal budget. In addition, we also have accelerated business education tax rate cuts for northern businesses, resulting in total savings of more than \$70 million over the next three years. All these millions will help businesses become more competitive.

As a part of our support system for small businesses, we operate 56 small business enterprise centre locations across the province. For our medium-sized businesses in southern Ontario, our business advisors in 12 regional offices are staffed with qualified experts that can help Ontario businesses compete and grow both domestically and internationally.

We also have a number of programs designed to foster entrepreneurship for our youth. We believe that how we encourage and support our young people will determine the future success of our economy. Our website is designed to serve as a one-stop shop for anyone interested in starting or growing businesses in Ontario. The website brings together resources from a variety of sources, allowing visitors to learn not only about government of Ontario support and programs but link to resources available from federal and municipal governments as well. Our website address is www.ontario.ca/sbcs.

As a part of this month's celebration of small businesses, I was at the Ontario Investment and Trade Centre this morning to kick off Salute to Small Business Month at the launch of Silver Lining's North American Tour to Inspire Entrepreneurs. Silver Lining is a success in its own right. This company started not long ago with one person, and they have grown to 10 persons and are helping small businesses to succeed. This event reinforces the theme of our government's effort to provide learning and networking opportunities to encourage small businesses' growth. I will be visiting businesses throughout the month to celebrate what small business does for this province.

Also, all of our MPPs will receive a package containing a template, news release and other support materials

so they can also visit companies and talk about the success of our small business community for the economy of our province. We ask them to do whatever they can in their communities to celebrate our small businesses and all that they do for us. By working together, we can identify more opportunities that will increase small business success and make sure that our small business community grows even stronger.

I really want to congratulate all those entrepreneurs out there who are in the small and medium-sized enterprises for the contributions they make to Ontario's economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Statements by ministries? Responses?

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to respond to the statement by the Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services on Salute to Small Business Month. I think we are seeing increasing numbers of small businesses in the province of Ontario, but unfortunately they used to be large- and medium-sized businesses that are now becoming small businesses under the McGuinty Liberals.

My colleagues tell me we should be calling small business the survivor club in this province. It's time this government recognized the contribution of small business. They are the wealth creators, the job creators, in this province and it's time that the government demonstrated its support for small business with actions, not just words.

The Minister of Small Business had an opportunity last Thursday in private members' business to demonstrate that he supports small business. As has been pointed out, 98% of all businesses are small businesses, and 43% of qualified labour shortages in Ontario are in jobs that require apprenticeship training or a college education. So what did the Minister of Small Business do last Thursday? He voted against a private member's resolution that would change the ratio of apprenticeship from three journeymen to one apprentice, to what most of the rest of the provinces in this country do, which is one journeyman to one apprentice. Basically, the minister sided with the union-controlled committees against the interests of small business. So instead of advocating and standing up for small business, he showed his true colours and did not represent the interests of small business.

This is a very simple change that could be made that would provide all kinds of opportunities for training for our young people who are looking forward to acquiring a trade and earning good money as electricians or plumbers or other trades in the small businesses that need those positions filled.

Just recently I met with a company up in Parry Sound that's looking at expanding, but their problem is that they just can't get the qualified people to be able to expand. So this minister and this government have demonstrated that they're not supporting small business with actions.

One of the biggest complaints of small business in the meetings I've held at round tables in my riding—and of course we, the PC Party, had an economic summit recently here in Toronto—is the cost of regulation. Currently, regulation costs business some \$13 billion every year. During the election campaign, Mr. McGuinty promised to remove one regulation for every new regulation that was introduced. I'm still waiting for that promise to be fulfilled, because it has not been fulfilled to this point. You ask any small business group you sit down with what their big issue is, and pretty much the number one issue is the red tape burden that they face.

1530

I point to surveys by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, and the recent survey they brought forward at our economic summit, where they asked a question on the increasing red tape burden: "How has the overall burden of provincial regulations on your business changed during the past three years?" That's totally within the mandate of the McGuinty government. How has it changed? The answer is that it has increased by 66%, as the businesses surveyed by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business pointed out.

If they had cost savings to do with reduced regulations, what would they spend the money on? They would invest in their equipment and business; they would pay down debt; they would hire additional employees. So this government is making it more difficult for them to survive; hence, the survivors' club.

I've seen and heard from constituents who say that we really need to make a difference in reducing regulations and making them simpler. Just last week, we had the labour critic ask a question of the McGuinty government and bring Stephanie Watt, who had a company that made cash rolls, here to the Legislature. That was an instance where Stephanie Watt, with her company, moved to the States because of the actions of the McGuinty government, the out-of-control regulations coming out of the Ministry of Labour that caused her to shut down her company and move it to the States. That's just one example.

So there's lots this government can do. They are very good about talking about it, but their actions so far have not supported small business in this province—small business that is so important to the economy, and the small businesses that are the job creators and wealth creators in this province.

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to respond on behalf of small business. Certainly the reality in the province of Ontario is that small business is suffering. I have had numerous consultations with the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas, and I can tell you that they presented a brief to the Liberal caucus two years ago and are still waiting for a response to some of their demands. Their demands are fourfold, and I'm going to go over them.

First of all, the major burden on small business is unfair taxation. The Toronto Board of Trade in fact has pointed this out. I brought in a resolution to reform business education tax across the province; it's still not reformed. Toronto's commercial property taxpayers are paying a rate that is 44% higher than the lowest urban rate in the region, Halton's 1.37%, and 30% higher than the GTA average. Toronto's business taxpayers do not receive a higher level of service than those outside the city, nor do Toronto's publicly funded schools benefit from businesses paying a higher rate of education tax. We in the New Democratic Party have been calling for a reform of business education tax in light of TABIA's concerns, and we've yet to see this government act.

The second way that they could help small business is to get rid of the outrageous red tape that is the plague of small business owners. We had a classic example of this in my own riding, where Karl's butcher shop shut after over 40 years in business. Why did it shut? It shut because of this government's red-tape regulation that would have cost Karl \$200,000 to meet their health regulations, instead of the fact that the Toronto health regulations said they were fine, and said they were fine for 40 years.

We saw it again with the smoking regulation, where this government brought in something that arguably could be necessary, but did it on the backs of small business and did not give small business the help it needed to meet the regulations that this government brought in.

Again, the minister talked about helping small manufacturers. A classic case of a small manufacturer we should be helping in the province of Ontario is ZENN cars. Here we have an excellent company that isn't allowed to sell their product in Ontario. They can sell their product in the States or in other provinces, but not in Ontario: an electric car. This is a government that claims it's green, that claims it's in favour of small business, but won't allow members in this House to drive a ZENN car from their house to this place.

Number three, this government does not protect those individuals in small business who are preyed upon by big business. I'll give you a case in point: franchisees who are constantly manipulated and taken advantage of by franchisors, some of them outright fraud artists. We've had examples with the CBC, and others have done stories on this. These perpetrators of fraud are still in action in the province of Ontario, still stealing—I can't use a stronger word than that—from mainly new immigrants who don't know their rights, who don't have worthy legal representation. I had one constituent who lost \$154,000 to a man who had already been convicted of fraud. There is no oversight of franchising, of franchisors; there's no oversight of that, and that needs to happen with this government.

Number four: Although we're still fighting for real rent control for residences, I can tell you there's no rent control of any sort for commercial leases. So what tends to happen in the retail sector is that if a retailer does well, their rent goes up and then they're forced to move.

Again, there's no insight here about the trials of small business; there's no help for small business against those who would exploit them who are big business owners.

Just to sum up, it's all well and good to laud small business and small business month, but what small business has pointedly asked the Liberal caucus for, and has yet to receive a response, is action. This government needs to act on behalf of small business. We don't need any more platitudes, we don't need any more statements; what TABIA and what business improvement areas across this province want is action. So I would ask the Minister of Small Business to stand up and act, and we can dispense with the platitudes.

DEFERRED VOTES

COLLEGES COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LA NÉGOCIATION COLLECTIVE DANS LES COLLÈGES

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 90, An Act to enact the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act, 2008, to repeal the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act and to make related amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 90, Loi édictant la Loi de 2008 sur la négociation collective dans les collèges, abrogeant la Loi sur la négociation collective dans les collèges et apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1537 to 1542.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Moridi has moved third reading of Bill 90, An Act to enact the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act, 2008, to repeal the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act and to make related amendments to other Acts.

All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arnott, Ted
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Barrett, Toby
Bentley, Christopher
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Brown, Michael A.
Brownell, Jim
Carroll, Aileen
Chan, Michael
Chudleigh, Ted
Colle, Mike
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
Duguid, Brad
Duncan, Dwight
Elliott, Christine

Gerretsen, John
Gélinas, France
Gravelle, Michael
Hardeman, Ernie
Horwath, Andrea
Hoy, Pat
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Klees, Frank
Kular, Kuldip
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Mangat, Amrit
Marchese, Rosario
Martiniuk, Gerry
Mauro, Bill
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Miller, Norm
Milloy, John
Moridi, Reza
Munro, Julia

Murdoch, Bill
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pendergast, Leeanna
Phillips, Gerry
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Runciman, Robert W.
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Savoline, Joyce
Scott, Laurie
Sergio, Mario
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 65; the nays are zero.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

OPPOSITION DAY

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls on the Premier of Ontario to support much-needed changes to the Youth Criminal Justice Act, including:

—expanding publication of names of young offenders convicted of violent crimes;

—ensuring that persons aged 14 and older convicted of violent crimes face sentences proportionate to the severity of the crime, including life for first- or second-degree murder; and

—making it easier to detain young offenders prior to trial who are charged with violent offences or a pattern of offences.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Runciman has moved opposition day number 1. Mr. Runciman.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I'm pleased to begin debate on a subject of importance for the people of our province, namely public safety improvements focused around reforms to the youth justice system. Our party, through our leader John Tory's white paper *Time for Action* published a few years ago, proposed a range of suggestions in dealing not only with crime but also the root causes of criminal behaviour by young people and how we can address those challenges, including such things as mentoring and tutoring, scholarships and internships, parental education and a fatherhood program. To date, none of the recommendations have been adopted by the Liberal government. That report is available for anyone who wishes to call our office at 416-325-0445.

Time for Action dealt with the rehabilitative issues in a significant way, and today's debate deals with the issue of instituting more effective ways of coping with the more violent repeat young offenders in our midst. That's an issue the Liberal government says it wants to deal with, but the vote today will tell the tale.

As members know, while we have the constitutional authority over the administration of criminal justice in our province, the responsibility for the creation and reform of the criminal laws that we enforce rests with the federal Parliament. Because of recent events around us, including school shootings, the issue of reform of our youth justice system is now under at least some discussion. I say "some" because all too often political and self-interested rhetoric drowns out the need for real debate. The resolution before the House is an attempt on

our part, the official opposition, to frame that debate on a specific feature of the youth justice system, namely its dealing with repeat and the most serious offenders.

I want to be clear from the outset: This focus is not meant to suggest removing the primary rehabilitative focus and purpose of the Youth Criminal Justice Act, and some will try to suggest that. The object of our justice system, including the youth justice system, is to protect the public, and that is best achieved when people of all ages decide either not to commit crimes in the first place or, having done so, to discontinue that antisocial conduct.

The justice systems, in many ways, especially youth justice, are public systems designed to serve the public interest. They are not the private preserves of lawyers, judges and criminologists. The public, including us as elected representatives, have the right and, I would suggest, duty to ask the tough questions about how those systems are performing and offer constructive suggestions for improvements.

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The resolution before this House specifically addresses the challenge of how the Youth Criminal Justice Act deals with young people who, because of the serious nature of the crimes they commit or their continuing criminality in spite of our best efforts, require action beyond the normal, purely rehabilitative intent of the act.

The resolution before the House speaks to expanding publication of names of young offenders convicted of violent crimes, ensuring that persons aged 14 and older convicted of violent crimes face sentences proportionate to the severity of the crime—that includes life sentences for first- or second-degree murder—and making it easier to detain young offenders prior to trial who are charged with violent offences or a pattern of offences. That has been a serious problem in Toronto.

We selected three specific areas of reform currently under debate because they permit discussion of the broader issue that I mentioned earlier: Can we improve the way the act deals with the most serious and repeat offenders, keeping in mind the overarching public interest and public safety priorities? We in the Progressive Conservative Party believe the answer to that question is a resounding yes, but that we will only get there by informed and honest debate.

So let's start with a real picture about violent and repeat youth crime itself. I urge members and the public at large to look carefully at the crime statistics themselves, because they reveal a truth not captured in self-serving bureaucratic claims and misleading media releases.

We all know the mantra, "Crime is down, so who needs justice reform?" We need to look closer, because as people on the front lines in the communities of this province know all too well, crimes of violence, drugs and weapons are not down. Equally, there is a disproportionately large volume of crime committed by a disproportionately small number of offenders—repeat offenders. These two facts—and that's what they are, facts—are the

nasty little secrets of the failure of the Youth Criminal Justice Act and what this resolution is aimed at.

To start with, it's important to understand the way the act diverts what are crimes out of the system. Speaker, you want to hear this; you won't believe it. More than 50% of what are actual crimes are no longer prosecuted as such. This also leads to significant under-reporting by the police, and we now keep no records of who has been diverted. Because we don't treat criminal conduct as a crime doesn't mean a crime hasn't been committed. Also, as the stats analysis shows, what is down is less serious crime, which people increasingly don't report, perhaps because increasingly nothing happens. But it's all mixed in with violent crime, which creates this comforting but inaccurate claim that crime is down.

The federal crime stats survey also explained an increasing failure to report crimes resulting from persons fearful of retribution, which is a very dangerous sign, and again this has been a significant problem in Toronto. Past reports have specifically raised this about youth crime and identified repeat youth offenders committing increasingly serious crime as the greatest challenge facing the youth justice system. I urge members to take the time and read the details of these crime stats, because you'll see what is the truth and what questions we should be asking. From last year alone, sexual assault, aggravated assault, robbery and assault with a weapon all increased, while homicides and attempted murder rates are about the same.

When comparisons are made, as they should be, over longer periods of time, the increases are even more significant and more concerning. Ontario's Office for Victims of Crime used to keep track of these statistical trends and provide that information to government, although given the neutering of that office by the current government, I doubt this is still occurring.

The problem that this resolution seeks to address lies at the core of the biggest challenge in youth justice; namely, the repeat and most serious offenders, where the balance of sentencing principles is different than, for example, with a first-time offender, where the focus is more properly on rehabilitation.

By permitting a discretionary publication of the names of young persons convicted of the most violent crimes, for example, we will restore a measure of balance to the system. Shielding young offenders from public attention is a legitimate tool for most persons, but does anyone here really think it should apply equally to all offenders, including repeat drug dealers, sex offenders, bank robbers, break-and-enter artists or gun-toting gangsters?

Treating young people differently and with an intended focus on changing behaviour through rehabilitation has always been the focus of youth justice in Canada, albeit in different ways and through different statutes. Notwithstanding this, Speaker, from the days of the Juvenile Delinquents Act—and you and I will remember that, not that we were juvenile delinquents—our youth criminal justice system had also previously allowed judges to consider the full spectrum of principles

at sentencing, including hope of rehabilitation, specific and general deterrence and denunciation. This was deliberately changed with the introduction of the Youth Criminal Justice Act by the former federal Liberal government. The new bill specifically excluded deterrence and denunciation as considerations by a court.

Our resolution proposes ensuring that courts are not artificially restricted in considering the full range of sentencing principles for what would be defined as serious and repeat offences.

Personally, I think the public expects their justice system to consider and prioritize public safety when it comes to sentencing a repeat bail-and-probation-violating armed robber, drug dealer, sex offender or gangster, irrespective of their age. The public deserves a system that is capable of something better than a revolving door.

This approach also includes what is already the law in the Criminal Code regarding persons convicted of murder who are sentenced to life, but with parole ineligibility terms set between five and 10 years.

The point of the resolution is to expand the application of the sentence over convicted murderers and not, as some might regrettably and inaccurately suggest today, locking 14-year-olds up for life.

Let me also add that by not dealing differently with these serious and repeat offenders, we are not doing them any favours, as the revolving door is a graduation ticket into adult criminality.

We should be clear that when these repeat and most serious young offenders are detained, this is the time to deliver the education and job-training skills in the necessary structured environment which is all too often missing in their lives.

While we clearly need deterrence as a principle in the youth justice system, we must always remember that it's hard to deter someone who feels they have nothing to lose. In that sense, custody for repeat and serious young offenders is not simply a punishment, but a realistic understanding that increased, effective and assured structure is a precondition for progress.

Finally, our resolution aims to remove the needless artificiality against pre-trial detention that courts face when dealing with older repeat and the most serious violent young offenders. This built-in defect results in the wrong people being released on bail, which results in more crime—and boy, have we seen that happening in the last few years. This is a complaint all too frequently heard from police and victims in our province. Once again, Ontarians deserve better than a revolving-door justice system.

Overall, this resolution is trying to bring this government, this assembly, into the process to fine-tune the youth justice system by keeping the properly rehabilitative focus for young people, but giving greater ability to courts to deal appropriately with repeat and the most serious offenders. It's a subject of immense importance and one that merits substantive participation rather than partisan defensiveness. We can make the youth justice

system work better if we have the will to do so. I hope members will join me by supporting this resolution.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: There's no question that everyone in this House and frankly everyone in this society finds crime, victimization and violence distasteful, something that we reject and something that action needs to be taken on. So, to the goal of reducing or eliminating crime amongst youth and amongst older people, everyone in this House would agree. The question we face is whether or not the solutions that are put forward today by the Conservative Party are in fact solutions that would deal with the problem. Do they correctly understand the problem? Will they exacerbate the problem?

When we've looked at this issue, when we've looked at authorities, at resources like the John Howard Society, we don't see an evidence base for the approach that's being taken by the Conservative Party in this particular matter, and given that there's a lack of evidence both to the effectiveness of their approach and their understanding of what causes this difficulty, this profound social problem, in the first place, you have to say that one can't support the motion that's been put forward by this party.

There seems to be an assumption that there's an epidemic of youth violence, and I have no doubt in my mind that there is youth violence. I was in a riding last night, York West, talking to people who live there who are extraordinarily disturbed by shootings that have happened in their community. But I have to say to you, Speaker, that I don't see that this resolution would in fact deal with that issue. It would not get at the roots of the issues. It would not deal with those dynamics that continually replenish the ranks of those who are engaged in criminal activity.

It isn't that I have any sympathy for anyone who shoots people; I have none. I have no sympathy for someone who engages in violence—none. But when I look at this problem and think about where we have to go as a society to actually protect ourselves, I ask myself, how do we prevent these issues? How do we prevent this circumstance from taking place?

Let's go first to some of the realities about the state of criminal activity in this society. Crime rates are at their lowest point in 25 years in Canada. I'll just note as an aside that capital punishment was abolished about 30 years ago. I know that one can have fun with statistics. There are ways of reshaping numbers so that things look worse, so that they look better. The speaker for the Conservative Party set out his analysis of how those numbers were different and how in fact they should be reinterpreted. In the end, we have an ongoing problem with youth violence. We have had it for decades. We need to get at the roots of it if we're going to talk about it seriously.

I note homicide rates have fallen by 36% between 1991 and 2004. That doesn't mean an elimination of violence, but it also says to us when we're dealing with

this problem that we're not talking to something that's exploding on the scene. It's something that's horrible, that we want ended, but it is not an issue that's taking over our society.

Violent youth crimes have increased 12% over the last 10 years, so, in fact, if we see an overall decline in crime, we've seen an increase in youth crime. But overall, violent crime is a small proportion of all youth crimes. We have to keep in mind that Ontario has the second-lowest youth crime rate in Canada after Quebec. It doesn't say that there's not a problem. It doesn't say that doesn't have to be addressed, but keep in mind that we are already in a jurisdiction with one of the lowest youth crime rates in this country.

How do we prevent violent crime? How do we best protect the public? How do we rehabilitate young people who do engage in crimes? As I said earlier, one of the most respected sources on these issues is the John Howard Society. They have 65 offices across Canada and work with thousands of youth in Ontario alone. They made a very substantive, thoroughly researched presentation to the government of Canada on the Youth Criminal Justice Act in August. They made a number of points in their presentation, based on evidence drawn from statistics and reality rather than simply from emotion or political interest. In my comments I'm going to draw extensively from what they had to say.

First, punishment does not prevent or reduce crime. I think that for the most part, people see punishment as something distant, something far away and not of immediate concern when they are driven emotionally, through addiction, through mental illness, to act in a way that's destructive. Interestingly, about a month or two ago, I had a chance to talk with two criminal lawyers in downtown Toronto about their practice and about what they encountered in the courts dealing with young people dealing with the police.

In the course of our discussion, it became very apparent that if you dealt with drug addiction and with mental illness issues, they would have very little business. They, in fact, would be very happy to move on to different areas of law, because for the most part they felt that if you didn't have substantial problems with drug addiction and mental illness, you would not have people acting in ways that are destructive. Yet at the same time I know, and many others of us know, that when people want assistance dealing with drug addiction, there are long waiting periods for treatment programs.

If we're serious about dealing with violent crime, if we're serious about dealing with people who engage in activity that disturbs our society, disturbs our homes, disturbs our sense of us as a people, then we have to talk first about going after those roots and dealing with that drug addiction. That is not part of today's motion. That has not been part of the debate. But if you're serious, if you really want to make a difference, if you want to prevent people from being harmed in the first place, then you go to the source and reduce the problem as much as you possibly can.

The John Howard Society, in their brief, said that the bulk of research shows that punishment tends to increase the likelihood that people will commit crimes. I know from growing up in Hamilton, dealing with some of the kids who came out of reform school, that reform school was like going to high school for crime. You went in, maybe tough and stupid; you came out tough, stupid and trained. I have real, substantial questions to ask about an approach that puts people in a situation where they will be hardened and further developed in their skill in engaging in criminal activity.

The John Howard Society argues that punishment is inherently destructive and expensive, and should only be used with utmost restraint. The assumption in this resolution, that heftier punishment will actually make a substantial difference in this society, is off the mark. There's no question that it plays to us emotionally. When we read a horrendous story of someone being shot, stabbed or beaten, we have a strong emotional response. We want it to be addressed. We want something to happen to the person who has acted violently. I understand that, because I feel it. But that doesn't necessarily mean that that course of action is going to prevent such activity from happening in the future.

The John Howard Society outlines in detail the argument that sentencing severity has no meaningful general deterrent value for young people, or anyone, for that matter. People who commit crimes simply do not consider the length of sentence they might face when making this often split-second decision.

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I think that's true. People act impulsively. They act, driven emotionally, driven by addiction, driven by mental health problems, and they do things or they act in ways that have no consideration at all for what the ultimate consequences may be to their victim or to themselves.

They noted that in particular for youth who commit serious crimes, rates of reoffence are the same regardless of the severity of sentencing. So, yes, you could have extraordinarily severe sentences, but would that actually result in a reduction in reoffences? Apparently not. They note that the youth who commit crimes are people who have high impulsivity, low self-control and also, often, mental health concerns and addiction. So, again, if you want to be serious about crime, where is the resolution talking about putting money into youth mental health, addiction prevention and addiction rehabilitation? Because if we really want to protect society, if we really want to reduce the potential damage to ourselves, our families and our community, we have to focus our resources there.

I note that American states with the death penalty have higher rates of homicide than those that do not. People are not thinking about the consequences. When I talk to people in Canada about stronger sentences—the death penalty—I say, “If you want those things, look at the American experience and tell me, generally, do you feel safer in Canada or do you feel safer in the United States, in jurisdictions that have those severe penalties?”

California: The California counties that enforce their famous three-strikes law did not show any decline in crime compared to other states. So I have to ask you and I have to ask those who have put forward this resolution: Show the evidence that determines that this is much safer.

South Africa and the United States are two countries that have some of the highest capital punishment rates in the world, and South Africa is a very dangerous place. Punishment is not enough to deal with desperation, drug addiction and mental health problems; it does not get at them. I don't have a problem with separating the dangerous from the rest of us, but I don't think this resolution is going to actually give us what we want. I don't think it's going to protect us, our families or our communities. Look at the empirical evidence, look at the jurisdictions that are very harsh on crime, and tell me that those are dramatically safer jurisdictions. I don't think that information is there. I just don't see it.

When this kind of approach is taken, you have to ask, is this consistent with other international norms? The UN has a Convention on the Rights of the Child that requires youth justice courts to impose sentences that ensure the care and protection of youthful offenders and that avoid the detrimental effects of detention as much as possible. Other UN rules mandate that youth sentences be minimal, proportional and in the child's best interests.

One would say, then, given international thinking on this issue, that again, this motion is outside those norms. And, frankly, if we subscribe to the protection of youth, children, in a system that we know is at best imperfect—Guy Paul Morin was falsely convicted of a crime he did not commit. Others have been falsely convicted of crimes they did not commit. Make no mistake: If this resolution were ever to be implemented, there would be many young people who would go to jail for extended periods of time at the age of 14 who would have been falsely convicted, because we are simply an imperfect society. We have the best judicial system that we have been able to evolve, but we have not evolved a perfect judicial system. We will never have that.

So again, if we want to substantially reduce the amount of crime we encounter in our society, we have to go to the roots of that crime, deal with those roots, and then, where we haven't been able to correct the problem, figure out where we go from there.

There's a suggestion as well that there be a public reporting and denunciation of offenders, that there be pre-trial detention and adult sentencing for youth. The motion seeks to expand the publication of perpetrators of youth crime, and I assume this is to denounce and shame young people as a deterrent. Well, we've already gone through the fact that, in general, sentencing doesn't deter them. Shaming and publication is probably not going to deter them, either. And I know that, emotionally, it is extraordinarily appealing—no question—but it is not going to give us what we want.

In my discussion that I had with those criminal lawyers a few months ago, we talked about pre-trial

detention, and they said the number-one determinant as to whether or not someone would plead guilty was whether or not they were in detention. If they were being held and they could plead guilty, make a deal and get out of jail, they would do that, because to not plead guilty and to stay on in jail awaiting trial was a very grim prospect, an extraordinarily grim prospect.

So if in fact in this resolution you're proposing more pre-trial detention, you're going to get a lot more people pleading guilty simply to get out of that pre-trial detention. There will be innocent people—because we know we've done it before, as a society—who will be in jail, who will be pled out, guilty, and have a criminal record, not because they did something but because things did not work well and they were stuck in prison, stuck in jail.

We've had young people die in custody in Ontario. Again, I say we have to use great care when we use custody because of the risks of wrongfully convicting people or wrongfully having them plead guilty, and also because for young people, jail can be an extraordinarily risky place.

We know that younger people do not have the grasp of reality that we have as adults. We set a variety of limits in this society around voting, drinking and contracts because we recognize there is a difference in the ability between an adult and an adolescent to make decisions and understand what's going on in the world. In fact, if we want to start changing these rules, then we have to understand that the rules still have to reflect the very different mentality that exists in those younger people.

There is an idea that youth who commit serious crimes should be tried as adults. That came up in the 1990s and it was found to be unconstitutional.

I should note that youth in Florida—and again, this is from the John Howard Society—who were transferred to the adult system were more likely to reoffend than those who remained in the youth justice system.

I'd like to say that we concur with the John Howard Society in saying that crime prevention is the best approach, addressed by taking on the underlying causes of youth crime. Criminal proceedings should be grounded in rehabilitation, not denunciation and deterrence. Amendments to the youth justice system should be based on evidence, not emotion and fear-mongering.

The John Howard Society says that the primary obstacle to evidence-based justice policy, where youth are concerned, is the predilection of legislators to yield to ill-informed preferences, namely, the mistaken belief that punishment and deterrence are the solution to youth crime.

Young offenders need to acknowledge and take responsibility for their crime, to the extent that that's possible, and they should be required, as much as possible, to repair the harm that they have done, but our approach, as a society, should be one of prevention, rehabilitation and public safety.

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When you talk to Canadians and go through the logic, most people support that approach. If we want to take on

the issue, let's reduce child poverty, provide high-quality daycare and high-quality early learning experiences, invest in strong public schools and expand community-based social and recreational programs for families. Those things will go much further in dealing with crime. When I was a city councillor here in downtown Toronto in the 1990s, one of the things that I found substantially reduced graffiti and vandalism in neighbourhoods was opening up the school gyms for basketball games in the evening. That substantially reduced the number of broken windows, broken bottles found on sidewalks and graffiti on walls. For a whole bunch of people, providing them with opportunities for outlets of their energy that are not destructive is a far more effective course of action than having a lot of police on the street and a lot of jail guards looking after kids who are too young. In the United States, simple community support programs such as home visits from nurses to low-income teen mothers, in areas where this is done, have led to reductions in crime rates in children of up to 80%.

It takes a while for a program like that to pay off. It is not immediate. But if we're actually going to have the safe streets that we want and the safe communities that we want, that's the direction we have to take.

I will leave the remaining time to my colleague, but I want to say that we cannot support this resolution that's come forward. We don't think it's practical. We don't think it is one that will stand the test of time, and it's one ultimately that logically is not defensible.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. David Zimmer: I want to address this motion, and I want to lay out an argument for my colleagues here in the Legislature why I am not able to support this motion. I've read the motion over carefully, and it speaks of violent crimes. It speaks of what we should be doing with persons who commit first-degree or second-degree murder, and it goes on and references violent offences and so on.

What that's code for here in Canada, "first- and second-degree murder," "violent offences," is gun crime, because the fact of the matter is that these first- and second-degree murder cases are by and large all committed by guns, in particular handguns. Here in the GTA we open up the paper every couple of days, and what is it? There's another handgun shooting. Someone's been shot by a handgun. The principal problem here is handguns. So the member's motion, in my view, rings hollow. In my view, it's disingenuous. He's put a motion forward and he said, "I know if we do these things in my motion, this is going to get a grip on youth crime. It's going to fix violent crime." But one of the principal ways to fix violent crime, to help eliminate those first- and second-degree murder charges, is to get rid of handguns in Canada.

It's a federal responsibility. We want to work with our federal partner in Ottawa. We want to work for a ban on handguns in Canada, in Ontario. Again, to my colleagues in the Legislature, it strikes me as disingenuous. If the

members opposite were really serious, in my view, about eliminating violent crime, one of the things they could step right to the fore on is joining us in putting pressure on the federal government and asking the federal government to put a ban on handguns.

In another manner, the motion just rings hollow. Again, it's disingenuous, because to fight violent crime, in addition to the handgun ban, there are a whole lot of things we can do to shore up the budgets of those agencies that are fighting violent crime.

The way the federal government can be a partner with us in that is to be fair to Ontario, to heed our requests for financial fairness in Ontario. We send all of that money up to Ottawa—we send \$20 billion extra a year up to Ottawa, and we don't get any of that back. If we got some additional monies back, if we got a fair shake from the federal government here in Ontario, we could use a portion of that money to further shore up the good work that we're already doing to provide an environment that combats violent crime, that changes the context of people's lives so that they don't get involved in violent crime.

On the monies available to us, we've already kicked in \$33 million to fight youth crime. We have hired more JPs, crown attorneys, judges, police, patrol officers. We've got \$28 million that we have put into the at-risk communities. We've got another \$15 million for the youth challenge fund. All of that effort is going to combat violent crime, to change the circumstances in which violent crime often arises.

So on those two things, we could get a lot of help from the members opposite here who have brought this motion forward: if they would join us in the handgun ban, and if they would join us in a fair financial deal for Ontario so that we had more money to fight crime and add to what we're already doing.

I want to say a couple of words about the facts of handguns, because one of the Conservative members from the Oshawa area, on June 12, 2008, said this: "For all intents and purposes, there is a handgun ban in Canada right now." I'm not sure just what she means by that, but, as a matter of logic, if the position is that for all intents and purposes there's already a handgun ban in Ontario, then let's take it to the next logical step. Why don't we formalize it by a legislative ban on handguns? It seems to me the logic is just not working there.

You should join us. You should join us in urging the federal government to have a formal ban on handguns, join us in our fight with the federal government for more financial resources to augment the good work we are already doing by changing the context in which violent crime already develops.

We have heard from the authorities that front-line responsibility for violent crime, for investigating the murders that see these tragic shootings throughout Canada and particularly here in the GTA—this is Chief Bill Blair, who is the president of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and the chief of the Toronto police department. He says, "Handguns are being used to kill

innocent people in our communities. We need to do everything within our power to keep guns out of the hands of violent criminals. We must stop them at our borders, limit criminal access to guns in our communities, and prosecute vigorously everyone who chooses to break our laws."

This is what Wendy Southall, chief of the Niagara Regional Police Service, says: "Handguns are a significant threat to public safety for all Canadians. The three anti-gun-smuggling measures proposed by Ministers Bentley and Bartolucci will help the Niagara Regional Police Service and our law enforcement partners to stem the flow" of illegal handguns.

Wendy Cukier, president of the Coalition for Gun Control: "We are grateful that Ontario is calling on the federal government to fulfill its international obligations to combat the illegal arms trade and to implement gun [marking] regulations...."

Finally, on this idea that we need the federal government to step up to the plate and share some of that money, that \$20 billion that we ship off to Ottawa, send it back so we can change the context in which violent crime often develops: Tony Cannavino, Canadian Police Association, says, "Public Safety Minister Stockwell Day has fumbled the ball and has failed to deliver on a key government commitment.... We have been waiting two years for this minister to deliver on the Prime Minister's promise, and we are disappointed by the short-sighted and inadequate response." That's a reference to the federal government's commitment to supply some 2,500 extra police officers throughout Canada, 1,000 of which would be earmarked for Ontario.

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You see, that's a part of the federal government's stinginess. We are sending them tons and tons of extra money, to the tune of \$20 billion, and we don't get it back. If we had our fair share, we could do a whole lot of things here in Ontario throughout the economy. One of the things that we could do is invest in communities and at-risk youth groups and various strategies to change the context in which gun crime occurs.

I am unable to support this motion. I urge my colleagues to vote against it. The motion is disingenuous, it's short-sighted, and it doesn't get at the problem. Ban handguns. Help us get more money from Ottawa.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Thank you for the opportunity to add my comments in support of this resolution to support changes to the Youth Criminal Justice Act. I'd like to approach it from a slightly different angle, by responding to some of the criticisms that we've heard and, quite frankly, we expected to hear from the other members, the government members in particular, because we've been hearing those same tired old lines for months and years on end.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Crime keeps going up

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Crime keeps going up, that's right.

One of the things we're hearing, and we heard this from the member from Willowdale, is, "Ban handguns. Work with the federal government, get the handguns banned, and all will be well." Is there anyone in Ontario who honestly believes that's going to be the answer to this problem, except perhaps the government members and maybe a few others? People understand this. People know that this is a multi-faceted problem and a simple handgun ban is not going to be the answer that we need, because criminals are not going to respect handgun bans. They don't respect anything else; what makes anyone believe they would respond to a handgun ban? That's simply not an answer to the problem.

The other thing that we're going to hear, if we haven't heard some of it already, is that there really isn't a problem with youth crime, violent crime, that we're making this up, and that the federal Conservatives are only bringing this forward at election time because it serves their purposes to do so. Well, I would say that if you take a look at the statistics, they tell the true story. What we have is a situation where it is true that some types of youth crimes are going down, particularly property crimes, but violent youth crimes are on the rise. The statistics say that the violent crime rate among young people, ages 12 to 17, climbed 3% between 2005 and 2006. That in itself might not be too alarming, because there are variances that occur from year to year, but if you look at the rest of the data—and this was provided, incidentally, by the Canadian police services—you have a 12% increase in violent youth crime in the last 10 years and a 30% increase since 1991.

Why the increase? Most youth criminal justice experts cite the increase in the number of gangs in Canada and gang violence being on the rise, and certainly we are seeing that in our communities, when you look particularly at the recent spate of stabbings and shootings of youth in the streets of Toronto. Let's take a couple of examples, though. Peel, for example, in 2003, had 39 known gangs. As of 2007, that number jumped to 108 gangs. And in terms of the gang members, they almost doubled from about 800 to about 1,500 during that same time period. In Toronto, currently, there are about 130 gangs, with 3,500 gang members.

What's the correlation between the crime and the involvement in gangs? First of all, you have youth-on-youth crime, and that's probably the most troubling of all of the statistics. You have situations where youth gang members are disrespecting each other and having retribution killings and so on. It's leading to an upward spiral in that kind of violence. Secondly, there's no question that senior gang members are using youth to insulate themselves from police suppression activities and criminal charges. We're not making this up. This comes from one of the foremost authorities on youth gangs in Canada, Michael Chettleburgh, who has written an excellent book called *Young Thugs*. For those members who haven't read it, it gives a startling perspective on what's going on inside youth gangs in Canada. He indicates what's happening is that the older gang mem-

bers, the ones who are over the age of 18, are getting the younger ones to do their dirty work for them, to be the ones to pull the trigger and commit these serious crimes, knowing that the youth will not have any significant consequences. So they use them as shields to protect themselves from criminal charges. The federal Conservatives realize this, and that's why they're trying to ensure that there are significant consequences for this specific type of behaviour.

The other criticism I know we're going to hear from the members opposite is the old "Conservatives want to jail teenagers." Nothing could be further from the truth. I think anyone who has any kind of experience in youth crime, in youth criminal behaviour, knows that one of the key things you have to have in place is rehabilitation programs. The member from Leeds-Grenville aptly put this forward, and certainly there is not a general wish on anyone's part to jail teenagers. But there is a need to recognize that there are some situations where rehabilitation programs in and of themselves are not going to work. Granted, it is a very small percentage of the youth that are involved in these very serious crimes, but all the rehabilitation programs in the world are not going to make any difference to some of these young people, and it is a very small, targeted group.

What we're talking about are the kinds of offences where young people are cold-bloodedly shooting other youth on the streets in broad daylight. That's something that the public has expressed its outrage about. The public is outraged that this kind of behaviour is happening on our streets, and they're demanding that something be done about it in order to protect our youth and protect society in general from this kind of activity.

I'd just like to quote from something the Prime Minister said, just to make it clear that rehabilitation is the primary goal here; it's not about punishment. I quote from the Prime Minister: "We are concerned about young people falling into a life of crime. We are developing and implementing prevention and rehabilitation programs to meet that challenge more effectively." He announced that a re-elected Conservative government would extend the youth gang prevention fund and increase its budget to \$10 million per year. They support a number of projects in communities to help at-risk youth—and that by no means is the only program that's out there to rehabilitate youth. But we have to come to grips with the fact that there are some young people out there who are committing crimes who need to be dealt with, and the public needs to be reassured that our young people are going to be protected.

I would ask all members of this Legislature to think about that, in terms of their vote on this resolution, and consider supporting what's going to protect our young people and protect our society in general. I thank you for the time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I have to say I'm pleased to speak to this motion and pleased to say that I disagree

with it completely. I'll make some arguments in that regard.

The member from Leeds–Grenville said in his remarks that he is not interested in removing rehabilitation from the act. He further adds that he wants an informed and honest debate. He continues by attacking bureaucrats, where he describes them as self-serving, suggesting that somehow they're protecting either themselves or these young criminals, and I find that a very serious charge.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: We can.

He also talks about wanting to talk about the facts. The member from Whitby–Oshawa talked about the government members, and presumably the third party as well, using the same old, tired lines and tired stories. You expected that, you said.

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If you listen to the arguments, it suggests that when Tories talk about the facts, their facts must be right because they're talking about the facts, and when the member from Whitby–Oshawa says, "We expected these arguments and the same tired old stories," that their lines are not tired or old, that only the arguments from the other parties are tired and old, and that they are privy to the facts and to the visceral honesty that people have about these issues and that they know better because the public knows better. But more than that, it's not just that the public knows better, but that they have the facts and that we ought to be ruled, they argue, by facts and nothing else.

I want to argue that your facts are a predilection of Conservative ideology. I do understand that it may not even be ideology in your party, it may be beliefs that you fundamentally hold, and that you don't separate an ideology from what you believe strongly to be the case, and that somehow deterrence is the way to get to it, shame is the way to get to it, and longer sentences are the way to get to the problem. You believe that, and I understand that.

I believe you're wrong. I don't believe that you are reading the literature, and if you are, you're dismissing it as simply language put out by academics. As Monsieur Harper would say, "What do these academics know?" That refers to the public as the ones who really have the knowledge and the instincts, they're the ones who know, not people like Harper, who is an academic himself, and dismissing all of the academics as having any real grip on the issue. I find it fascinating that Mr. Harper would dismiss academics, who are presumably self-serving and don't do any research to benefit the public good, but rather they do research to benefit themselves. It's a curious, curious argument made by Mr. Harper and so many of my Conservative colleagues here.

I'm not one who shares their view. I share the view that we need to deal with crime and that it does lead to social consequences and that crime does do harm, whether it's small or big. I'm no expert in this field, but I am a big believer in rehabilitation and I am a big believer

in dealing with the causes of the crime more than the crime itself.

I've got to tell you, from time to time, even my own feelings come into conflict, because rehabilitation versus deterrence, rehabilitation versus humiliation and versus serious, serious attack on those who commit those crimes—I come into conflict with that, too, because if one of my daughters were ever to be violated sexually, I would become a fascist in no time. This is where I am sympathetic to some of the arguments that many political members of the Conservative Party make, including parents who feel strongly about some incidents of crime that involve sexual abuse. I am one who has no tolerance whatsoever for sexual abuse against children, and/or women and/or men, for that matter. So this is where I am often torn, in the feeling that if I or a member of my family were a victim of it, what would I do? I understand that emotion. That's what some of these motions, some of these ideas, take: a lot of our attention in an emotional way that often is wrong and inappropriate. But I do understand the feelings—and sexual violence is one of them, and killing somebody is another. But is our desire to punish and to shame and to put him away for life the answer? That's what the motion focuses on. It focuses on punishment, on shame and longer sentences. It doesn't focus on rehabilitation. You've got the member from Leeds–Grenville saying, "We are not interested in getting rid of rehabilitation," but I don't see it in the motion. When I look at what the academics say on this matter—and I want to read it into the record—I am concerned about what they say on this matter. I take this from the John Howard submission to the government of Canada.

"A fundamentally important reason to keep deterrence out of the YCJA is that the principle is inconsistent and incompatible with rehabilitation, and therefore leads to great and unjust judicial variance. Under the Young Offenders Act ... both deterrence and rehabilitation were included as sentencing principles without prioritization and this led to a confusion and inconsistency across youth criminal court decisions. Professors Doob and Beaulieu concluded that this high variance was due to judges having to give precedence to one of these irreconcilable goals."

In other words, rehabilitation and deterrence are not compatible. They are irreconcilable.

"The YCJA sets out clearly, in its Preamble and Declaration of Principle, that the objective of the legislation is to rehabilitate and reintegrate young people who commit crime. These principles will be contravened if deterrence and denunciation are added as sentencing principles through Bill C-25, recreating the flaws and confusion that underlay the youth criminal justice system prior to 2002."

So when the member from Leeds–Grenville says, "We've got nothing against rehabilitation," as I read into the record these two principles or ideas of rehabilitation and deterrence, they are not compatible. So saying that he is for rehabilitation and in the same breath saying, "We want harsher sentencing as a way to deal with the crime

and as a way to deal with our emotions,” do not jibe. They’re inconsistent.

Clearly, we’re getting to the politics of the issue, and clearly we’re getting to the emotions that people have around crime. Most people, when you talk about crime, if it’s serious—no one has any sympathy. Whether they’re seven, 10, 12, 14, 16 or 20, it doesn’t really matter, and I understand that. That’s why I put myself in that position.

But I am telling you that the focus is wrong and that the Conservative Party, generally speaking, never focuses on the roots of problems, never does—not under Mike Harris, not under Harper, not under John Tory, not under anyone, although I hear John Tory from time to time. This is why I find it curious that we have this motion before us, because John Tory seems to understand, when he goes to places like the Toronto Community Housing Corp., that you’ve to deal with issues of poverty.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Of course we do.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The member from Whitby—Oshawa says, “Of course we do.” Put it in your motion so we can see clearly that you don’t just want to deal with the end result of the crimes but want to get to the problems of why they’re initiated in the first place. I never hear Tory members say, “Hmm, does crime have anything to do with drug addiction? Does crime have anything to do with kids coming from a family where they’re alcoholics and have been for a long, long time? Does crime have anything to do with the fact that sexual abuse by people in a family situation of kids is perpetrated and perpetuated forever and that that leads to instability, emotionally and psychologically, and that, yes, from time to time that too leads to crime?” Does the Conservative Party talk about emotional illness and those kinds of problems that people have? Mental illness: Do they talk about it, and if they talk about it, do they say, “What are we, Conservatives, doing about that?”

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Yes, we do.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: They say yes, and yet I never hear them. I am in this place, I’ve been here for 18 years, and I don’t hear them.

Raymond Corrado, another academic—excuse me—says that he “and his colleagues confirm that their research ‘underscores that seeking deterrence for young offenders is a misguided venture and of little value.’ A classic study on the decision to recidivate found that few violent, incarcerated youth reported that—before committing a crime—they thought about their chances of being caught, the impact on their family or the potential sentence they would receive if caught.”

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Kids who commit crimes don’t say, “Oh, my God, Mike Harris had the right idea. The boot camp is going to stop me from committing a crime.” They don’t think about that. They don’t think about Harper and his desire to incarcerate for a long time, like the Americans, who have two million people in their jails. They don’t say, “My God, I’m going to stop my crime-related activity, because I’m going to go to jail for 10 years instead of five.” They don’t think about that. So this motion isn’t

going to help us, except to appeal to the visceral emotion that people have that if we’re tougher on them, it will solve our problems. It just doesn’t do it.

I understand the feelings you’re trying to reach into as you’re speaking to the general public, whom you say understands these issues. I understand what they understand: They feel that they would want retribution and that they would want punishment, because if violence has been done to me, it needs to be corresponded with equal punishment in turn. I understand those feelings. It’s just that it isn’t borne out by the evidence. The evidence is abundantly clear, and if the Tories review the literature from the academics, they will find that it doesn’t work.

The evidence they bring forth speaks to facts about crime increasing. We have the second-lowest crime rate in the country, next to Quebec. But if you just listen to the Tories, all they want to do is show the crime statistics, make sure that people are abundantly frightened and then tell them, “We’re going to punish these kids, now more than ever. We, the Tories, are the only ones who can do it. Vote for us and the problem will go away.”

It just will not go away that way. So I appeal to people who are watching this political channel to look at what the research says, to look at what other jurisdictions have done, to look at the statistics from the States, where the California counties that enforced the famous three-strikes law did not show any decline, compared to other states.

We have to look at what we can do as a society; what we can do in the trial system, because we have very few judges to deal with these people; how we can help these kids avoid crime in the first place. That’s where the emphasis should be, in my view.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I’m pleased to be able to speak to this opposition day motion today. I must say I was a little bit surprised when I read it and discovered that it’s quite frankly a request that this House endorse Harper’s campaign promises. Nevertheless I do want to assure anyone who is listening to this debate today that the McGuinty government does, in fact, take violent crime very seriously. We take youth crime very seriously. We know that these are societal issues and that we have to deal with them. In fact, we have spent over \$73 million fighting gun crime. We have hired more police officers, crown attorneys, judges, justices of the peace, probation officers and parole officers. We have also supported stronger mandatory sentencing for gun crimes. We know this is a serious problem; we know we have to deal with it.

What we don’t see in this motion is any attempt to deal with the problem of guns. There seems to be an attitude that we won’t worry so much about all the guns that are out there; we’ll just wait until some youth commits a crime and then we’ll lock them up for 10 or 20 years. We don’t think that’s the way to deal with it. We think we need to actively ban handguns.

I know that the members of the Conservative Party will say, "That isn't going to solve the problem, and you can't really do that. Lots of people have a right to hold them legally." But if we look at what the Toronto police tell us, 30% to 50% of the gun crimes in the city of Toronto are actually committed with guns that at some point have been legally registered. In other words, they have been stolen from the person who had the right to have them. So there is a huge number of guns out there that were legally registered, and we think we need to deal with that. We think we also need to work with our federal cousins to get tighter control over guns coming across the border. So, yes, there are some things we need to do with the federal government; this isn't it.

Now, I'd like to look a little bit at the whole issue of disclosure, because according to this motion, if you just publish the names of these kids in the Toronto Sun, that's going to solve the problem. I don't happen to agree with this. But there actually is something we could do in terms of the disclosure rules that would have a serious positive impact on dealing with the problem. I'm not sure whether most people understand this or have thought about it, but in fact, the kids who are caught under the Youth Criminal Justice Act are, by definition, school-age children.

What happens with the vast majority of people who are young offenders is that they are essentially sentenced to school; that is, their probation order or their parole order says, "You must attend school if you're not going to be taken into custody." The justice system actually sentences young offenders to school. But interestingly, the federal legislation does not require that the police or the systems disclose to the schools when young offenders are ordered to return to school or attend school. So if we really want to do something around the disclosure rules with the federal government that would be helpful, it would, in fact, be to make it mandatory for the courts and for the police to make it known to the principals, teachers and safe schools superintendents in our school system when they have young offenders in the schools.

That would have two impacts. First of all, we would be able to know when we have dangerous young offenders in our schools, and that would enable the principal to make sure that other students, who are the colleague students, have a greater assurance that the schools can manage those students and keep them more safe. Secondly, there's been a lot of discussion about prevention and rehabilitation. If, in fact, as is the practice of the justice system of Canada, we in essence sentence young offenders to school, it's very important that the people who have the primary care of those kids know about the status of that young offender so they can design programs for them that will help in their rehabilitation. There is something very important that we could work with our federal cousins to amend around disclosure laws, but it's not telling the Toronto Sun; it's bringing the education system into the loop so that we can all work together.

I'd also like to comment briefly on the sentencing provisions because, as you're all aware, I happen to have

a constituent who's very well-known to all of you, Steven Truscott, and we've discussed that here in this House before. When Steven was 14 years old, he was sentenced to hang. That was commuted to a life sentence. Ten years after that original conviction, the criminal justice system and the Parliament of Canada said, "You know, there's really no point in keeping this young man locked up any longer." And they were right. He went on to live in my community and live as normal a life as possible for somebody who has a murder conviction hanging over their head and is living under an assumed name. He brought up a family and was a contributing citizen in our country, in my city, because somebody had the wisdom to say, "Yes, this young man"—and remember, the conviction still stood; it wasn't until almost 50 years later that there was an admission that this was a wrongful conviction. So at the time when he was released from prison, he was still regarded as a violent murderer. The system said, "There's no point keeping this young man locked up any longer."

So I have a huge problem with just saying, "We're going to lock all these kids up forever and throw away the key." Experience shows that's not helpful.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate.

1700

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to be able to join in the debate today. I just want to offer a comment to the member from Willowdale, Mr. Zimmer, who was talking about the use of banning handguns. I think he confuses the instrument of violence with the act itself. I guess I can understand this, as he was the person who led the pit bull legislation, where obviously, by their very existence, they were deemed dangerous. But I really want to talk, in the few moments that I have, on two words that get bandied around in this debate, and they are "rehabilitation," and one that doesn't get as much effort, "responsibility."

I also want to tell you two anecdotes. Several years ago, I had a student who came to me very proudly to show me a very tattered and worn newspaper article that he carried proudly in his wallet, and it was a newspaper article that described an individual who had been charged and convicted of a break and enter. While there's all of this conversation about public disclosure of individuals in that age group, I thought it was interesting to just give you some sense that here was a kid whose claim to fame was this, and the only way he could demonstrate this was to show me the piece of newspaper and say, "This is me."

The other deals more with the question of responsibility. Again, this is a true story. When a teenager was prepared to risk being picked up for drinking underage at a party, but the very next year not willing, and even contemplating, taking the risk of other kids being at the same function when this individual had reached the age of majority, so a sense of responsibility that wasn't there the year before, because the law doesn't require you to be responsible at 18.

I tell you those two things in terms of rehabilitation and responsibility. Obviously, any system of justice must be fair and it must be balanced, and we must deal with both the perpetrator and the victim. Now, when we are able to look at the most recent and advanced research on rehabilitation, today there are many studies on child development and the social, intellectual, physical, as well as health determinants, and this research provides us with the framework for making specific programs to meet the needs of young offenders.

Members have referred to the previous government. I want to talk about Minister David Tsubouchi when he was Solicitor General. He brought into place an opportunity for young offenders to meet and train dogs from the Ontario SPCA. By the way, I must say that this same program still exists, but it demonstrates the efforts that can be made on the rehabilitation side. But on the responsibility side, there are people who must understand that there are many influences, many bad choices, many personal obstacles, but at the end of the day, everyone has to choose between being a victim of their circumstances or taking charge and assuming responsibility for themselves. Feeling sorry for yourself will never turn your life around; blaming others will never give you confidence to be who you want to be. At the end of the day, it's you and the mirror.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I was listening to many speakers who spoke before me, especially the Leader of the Opposition, who brought this motion before this House. It's very important to talk about crime, especially when we live in this day and age, when we see a lot of killing in many different cities, especially in the Toronto area, or the GTA. You don't think about this crime and how we control it, but the member opposite forgot to talk about prevention and the cause of those crimes. When I was listening to him, he said he was not interested in knowing what led to the crime, but he was interested in putting big, huge and harsh punishment on people who commit the crime. I agree, for some families—especially when they lose a loved one or they get hit, they feel bad about it, but it's very important when we talk about dealing with this very important issue to talk about many different reasons, the causes of those crimes.

I was listening to the member from Trinity-Spadina speaking about this issue, and he was passionate about it. I agree with him fully. We have to look at many different issues: poverty, mental illness, smuggling guns from United States to Canada—many different things causing those crimes. I think it's very important that our government came with many different initiatives to stop the smuggling of guns from the United States. I heard the Attorney General this morning responding, his answer to the opposition about how we can tackle crime on the street.

The federal government promised 2,500 police to go on the street, and some of them were supposed to come

to Ontario. As a matter of fact, what we had was a five-year contract for 1,000 police.

What about smuggling guns from the United States? The minister of national security, Stockwell Day, promised a lot, but what have we seen? A lot of smuggling from the United States, a lot of guns coming to our cities to our towns and being used, and many people getting killed as a result of that.

I fully agree also with my colleague from Guelph, who gave an example of a person who lived in her riding, her constituent, who was accused of committing a crime when he was 14 years old. Back then, they thought he should be killed, hanged, because of whatever he supposedly did, but he never did it. He was let go, lived a normal life, got married, had kids, and many different issues came with it. Now it appears to all the people across the province of Ontario that he's innocent.

It's easy and quick: Somebody commits a crime; let's jail them forever, especially if they are youth, and then we'll forget about the problem. We'll create a huge camp for people who have supposedly committed a crime. And as we mentioned many different times, most of the time those people are innocent, because we don't have a perfect system. It doesn't matter what we do. We have a great judicial system, but we can make a mistake as human beings.

I think the most important thing for us in the province of Ontario, as a government, as a society and as a community, is to look at the cause of those crimes. Look at poverty, look at mental illness, look at people unable to integrate, and look at the structure of the families, because most of those people who commit crimes most of the time, especially the youth, are from broken families. Instead of looking at the crime itself, which I think is very important, we want to look at the cause of that crime.

My colleague from Willowdale outlined it very well. As you know, we are talking these days about fairness for Ontario because we send a lot of money to the federal government. We expect some money to come back to give us the ability to invest in communities, supporting youth, supporting young offenders and supporting people who have no supports in life in order to prevent them from committing a crime. When we talk about those issues, it is not about party, not about Conservative or Liberal or NDP. We're talking about fairness for the people who live in this province, who work on a daily basis to send taxes to the federal government. We expect some money back to give us the chance and ability to support our communities, to prevent crime from happening. This is what we talk about, fairness. I support my colleague from Willowdale when he has talked about it eloquently, many different times, and also the member from the NDP, when he was talking about our commitment to community and society.

It's not what the Leader of the Opposition said. He said to create a harsh punishment, create a huge camp and forget about them. We believe in prevention. We believe in rehabilitation. This is the way to support our

community and to maintain our community functioning and vibrant. That's why I'm not supporting this motion. I hope all the people who are hearing us today, our colleagues and even the opposition, will stand up with us and say "no" to the Leader of the Opposition, because his treatment does not solve the problem. It causes more problems.

We have to go back and listen to our chiefs of police across the province of Ontario. The chiefs of police of Toronto, London, Guelph and Ottawa all came together and told us that combating guns is the most important tool to stop crime, to eliminate crime.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: This is an important motion. We hear of far too many instances of young people involved in violent crime, oftentimes first- and second-degree murder, and we see a government here at Queen's Park that's been missing in action, going on five years now, when it comes to dealing with these kinds of examples of violent crime. It's unacceptable that anybody in this province would feel unsafe in their own home or in their school or feel threatened in their place of work.

1710

We know the bullets are flying in Toronto. Between 2005 and 2006, young people accused of homicide provincially rose by 90%. That's clearly appalling. Here in Toronto, 2005 will forever be known as the year of the gun, with the final victim, 15-year-old Jane Creba. She was caught in the crossfire down by the Eaton Centre in a gang-related turf war. That was on Boxing Day. A number of people eventually were charged—a number of teenagers. One stood trial on charges of second-degree murder.

As I've indicated, 2005 was the year of the gun, yet two years later we saw statistics for 2007, and murder rates were even higher. Party leader John Tory, to his credit, filled what I consider a void of leadership by the Premier by holding his own summit on violence affecting young people, and the opposition does have a plan that's been put forward on crime. I do have a question for the members opposite. I really ask, why does this government have no plan?

We know that the most serious youth offences are basically linked to gangs, someone defending their reputation, defending their territory with respect to selling drugs. Again the question is, how many bullets have to fly and how many deaths does this government have to see before it realizes that it has to strengthen some of the legislation with respect to youth criminal justice?

We know crime by young people is prevalent in the GTA. There are smaller communities across the province of Ontario, and in my own riding—I think of Caledonia—we're not exempt. I think of a home builder named Sam Gualtieri who, regrettably, last fall was left in the unfinished house he was building for his daughter, one blow short of death. Sam Gualtieri was checking this House. He was confronted by a gang of young native people. They beat Sam on the head with a piece of oak

stair rail until he was unconscious. Reports are that his son was there and yelled, "He's dead. He's dead," and the gang of young aboriginal youth ran off. As a result, Sam's Gualtieri's life has been altered forever.

What about the lives of those teenagers, those young people who were involved? Are they barely affected by what they have done? There is obviously to date no justice for Sam Gualtieri as these young people essentially got a slap on the wrist—no worries, no repercussions, not even a worry that their name will be in the papers. I will use the cliché, if you will, that if you're old enough to do the crime, you're old enough to do the time.

Some say, and we hear references, that offenders have rights and we have to be cognizant. Victims have rights as well, and it is high time we did put the rights of victims ahead of offenders. You can rehabilitate people. However, you also have to inculcate them with the knowledge of the seriousness of what they have done.

How many young people are reoffending? We know that serious crimes are being committed by people who are out on bail because conditions are often ignored. Often, criminals don't feel constrained by the conditions of their release. We know that this Ontario government is quick to insist, for example, that honest, hard-working farmers I know down in Haldimand-Norfolk have to report the number of beans they harvest each year, they have to report the number of bales of tobacco that leave their pack barns, yet we have a government here that refuses to track sentencing deals agreed to by crown attorneys. We have a government that does not document the number of people who commit these crimes while they're out on bail, a government that does not document even the number of individuals granted bail or denied bail.

It is time to throttle down this approach of catch and release, which puts dangerous people, in many cases, back out on the street within days of being arrested. In safe communities, people have confidence in the justice system. They're confident that the police have the backing they need to get the job done and that when criminals are caught, they will be punished, while victims will receive the kind of support and help that is required. I maintain this is not happening in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I am pleased to actually be able to rise and speak in opposition to this motion. I know at first glance, and as you go through it, it has a lot of emotional appeal. I think most people certainly understand the need to have justice or to see that justice is done in the sense that young people are as responsible for their actions as anyone should be and that there should be an accountability in the system for them. I think we all understand that. We all understand the need for some justice for everyone.

But I also look at it and I think it doesn't really talk about how to handle this in terms of prevention or rehabilitation afterwards. It simply says, "We want to

lengthen the sentence. We want to make the sentences more severe as a way of acting as a deterrent.”

Myself, I'm not a child psychologist or psychiatrist. I draw on my own experience as a parent when it comes to understanding how children react and how young people react to the concept of time, and certainly the grasp of reality that young people have is not the same as an adult's. They live in the moment. They're not thinking about what might be the consequences of an action. They don't really often think about the fact that they may need to be accountable for those actions. They're simply going to move along and do something. If they are motivated by a gang, by peers, to do these things, there's that element in there as well, and not one of them will stop for a moment and say, “Well, if I do this, that means five to 10 years in jail.” That's not in their minds at all. What we need to do more than anything else is look at prevention and rehabilitation.

There's no doubt that we need to make children and young people accountable for these actions, but, like I said, I don't believe we can do that by lengthening the sentence. I think in a sense all we do at that stage is create the old “out of sight, out of mind” mentality that we lock them up and then we don't have to deal with them any more. That's not appropriate, either, for young people. These young people need the opportunity to rehabilitate themselves. They need the opportunity to make themselves into productive members of society.

We have a number of things—and it's been addressed by other members—in terms of what causes these young people to regress into crime. We need to deal with things such as youth at risk. We certainly have communities where young people are more at risk of these types of things than in other areas. We've seen a number of situations, especially here in Toronto, where we have large communities of youth at risk.

So, as a government, we have moved forward with a number of strategies to help those youth, including things such as the youth challenge fund, which is an opportunity here in Toronto that is targeted strictly to Toronto to help young people who live in communities at risk to find alternatives, to deal with prevention, to deal with rehabilitation.

1720

I don't believe that by lengthening sentences, you will somehow create some kind of deterrent. That is not the case at all. I've seen, in a lot of situations, even in my own communities, where we need to deal with the opportunity for children to have something to do, for young people to have something to do. They do move in groups; they do act in gangs. If we can get those young people off the streets and involved in opportunities and doing activities that teach them responsibility and teach them accountability, then we can do a lot more for these people than by simply locking them up and forgetting about them, letting all of us feel like there's some kind of comfort there, but knowing that these people will grow into adults who will never recover, who will never rehabilitate just because they have a longer sentence.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: Nothing is more important than the safety of our community. Ontarians who live in neighbourhoods plagued by crime not only have their personal safety threatened, but their quality of life is diminished and their hopes for the future are quashed.

It's up to the leaders of this province and this country to ensure that we do everything possible to keep our citizens safe. The first step in doing so is to look at the root of what threatens our safety. The obvious answer is crime, and until we get tougher on those committing crime, nobody's safety is assured.

The people of Ontario have a right to know who is committing serious offences against their fellow citizens. We must stop protecting the identity of those aged 14 or older who are convicted of crimes such as manslaughter, murder or aggravated assault. We have the right to know the perpetrators behind these acts of violence. By making this amendment to the Youth Criminal Justice Act, we are increasing safety for all. While we recognize that criminals have rights, so do the victims of their crimes.

Of course, publishing their names does not go far enough. Young people found guilty of committing a crime as serious as murder must be handed tougher sentences. Ten years for first-degree murder and seven years for second-degree murder is lenient. Taking another life demands a proportionate prison sentence. Young criminals, like their adult counterparts, must be held accountable for the choices they make.

Further, I support amending the Youth Criminal Justice Act to make it easier for the justice system to detain accused young offenders who pose a risk to public safety. Give our judges the power they need to detain offenders who, if released, might cause further harm to the people of their community. We must protect the safety of the good people of our province and country.

I think that anyone who has ever been a victim of crime would agree with these amendments to the Youth Criminal Justice Act. Ask a parent who has lost a child to gang violence. Ask them how they'd feel if a person who murdered their son or daughter was given a slap on the wrist. Question how they'd feel about protecting the identity of a young person who brutally murdered their loved one. Ask an innocent person who was assaulted with a weapon how safe they feel when the young person who robbed them of security is released from custody in hours.

According to press reports, close to 40,000 youths were accused of serious and violent crimes in 2006. These incidents included 160 murders or attempted murders, 2,100 sexual assaults and 4,500 robberies. We cannot sit back and accept this as normal behaviour in our society. Think of the many victims who were impacted by those crimes, who may never feel safe in their homes and their neighbourhoods.

The thousands of convicted youths who threaten our personal safety must understand the seriousness of their actions in the hope that they will not be repeated. It is

reasonable to expect safe homes, safe streets and safe communities. These expectations can be met by getting tough on crime.

Our children and educators have a right to safe schools. It is a sad day when lockdown procedures are taught in our schools. It's even a sadder day when school lockdowns occur frequently because of the safety of students and educators who are threatened by a potential criminal act.

Threats to our safety and well-being should not be accepted, and we must act to make every neighbourhood a place where the fear of physical violence does not exist. I urge Dalton McGuinty to support these much-needed changes to the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'm pleased to rise on this very important issue, an important issue that all Ontarians are concerned about and interested in, and that is our right to live safely and freely in our communities. It's why we have had, for the entire time that Premier Dalton McGuinty has been the Premier of this province and we have been the government, an approach that is tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime. We have spoken and acted to ensure that those who commit crimes are brought to justice, and that justice is effected as it must be. We have worked to ensure that those who pose the greatest risk to our society, those who are the danger, receive the tough, serious sanctions for the protection of society that they must receive. We've also recognized that ultimately, the greatest protection is that a crime doesn't happen at all. The greatest way to ensure that we have safe communities is to reduce criminal incidents, to prevent them from happening in the first place, and that's tough on the causes of crime.

I just want to talk about a few of the initiatives we have followed over the past five years, to follow the "tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime" approach. With respect to ensuring that those who pose the greatest risk to society receive the serious sanctions that they must, Premier Dalton McGuinty and the government of Ontario pushed for changes to the Criminal Code to bring in more mandatory sentences for those who use guns in crimes. We were successful. We pushed for changes to the Criminal Code for reverse-onus bail to ensure that public safety would be protected when the question of bail was considered. We were successful. We have pushed for more police on the street. My colleague and his predecessor, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, have brought in programs to put more than a thousand police officers on the streets of Ontario. We committed to it. We fulfilled that commitment.

But we've done more than that. For the special issue and the special challenges posed by gun crimes and gangs, we brought in the anti-guns and gangs task force, which is renowned throughout North America as a leading approach to being tough on those who pose the greatest risk. But it didn't stop there. In Toronto, you have the

Toronto anti-violence strategy, TAVIS, and outside we've got its equivalent, PAVIS, which is a way of ensuring that you have police officers where they're needed most. They're to investigate crime, but where they're not needed, in special response situations, they're to make positive community contacts with individuals, with community leaders, with businesses—more police officers on the street to effect the TAVIS and PAVIS strategy.

But we haven't stopped there. We have also worked very hard to invest in our communities. The Minister of Children and Youth Services, for example: investments in our youth and investments in the communities. Communities such as Toronto, for example, have been working hard as well to invest in communities because we recognize, ultimately, that if you can keep a young person out of a life of crime, that not only enables them to fulfill their potential, but that is safety for the lifetime of that young person. But if you get it wrong at that stage you have a lifetime, potentially, of criminal activity from the young person, so that is a very important age.

We've not stopped. We have called on the federal government to take some additional steps, as they can. Unfortunately, although they talk a lot, they're pretty short on action and shorter on fulfilling their promises and commitments. Let me give an example: They talk about youth violence, they talk about violence by adults, they talk about safer communities. We have called for a national ban on handguns. The federal government refuses to follow through on that initiative. I don't know what possible utility a handgun has in the possession of people in 21st-century Ontario or Canada. Of course, the federal government would tell us that handguns are virtually banned. There are over 200,000 handguns in the province of Ontario—virtually banned? Two hundred thousand of anything is a virtual ban? They must live in a virtual world; ours is a world of reality. When the federal government decides to accept its responsibility and impose a national ban on handguns, it won't be the answer to everything, but we will reduce the risk to all law-abiding Ontarians. I hope the federal government will finally pick up its responsibility. I say to my colleagues on the opposite side of the House, have you picked up the phone to ask Prime Minister Harper and the federal Tories to do that? I don't think so.

1730

What about more police officers on the street? You remember the promise during the last federal election. Today is all about the promises being made in this federal election. During the last federal election, you will remember the federal Tories saying, "We're going to put 2,500 more police officers on the street throughout Canada." How many have we got so far? You would think it's a relatively simple promise. They had billions of dollars left to them by the previous Liberal government. Have they put 2,500 police officers on the streets of Canada for life? No, they have put aside money for 1,000 police officers. Now, 40% of a promise is not exactly a promise fulfilled, but wait, it gets better. They have only provided the money for five years. What

happens at the end of five years? If London gets more police officers, does London, Ontario, then have to fire those police officers because the Conservative government in Ottawa won't fulfill their promise?

It doesn't end there. The federal Tories promised to strengthen the youth criminal justice bill, and that's what they're talking about today. Let's see whether they delivered that promise. They tabled and introduced amendments to the Youth Criminal Justice Act which got it all backwards. Their rhetoric didn't match the legislation. Why do I say that? They introduced legislation to amend the Youth Criminal Justice Act to follow their last election's promise, which wasn't tough enough on those youth who pose the greatest risk. They didn't even follow the recommendations of the Nunn commission in Nova Scotia for out-of-control youth who need to be kept in custody pending their trial, who need serious sanctions when they are found to have committed offences. They didn't fulfill the Nunn commission recommendations in their proposed amendments. They didn't fulfill their commitment. And now here we are again being asked to comment on their commitments. I say simply that if you want to parade around, as the federal Tories are, and talk about crime; if you want to parade around on your promises, then we're going to judge you on your promises. You didn't fulfill the police officers on the street commitment. You didn't fulfill the tough measures that you were supposed to take for youth criminal justice. Why should anybody believe that you're going to do what you say you're going to do now when you haven't done it in the past?

Our position is that we'll continue to fight for the safety of Ontarians. We'll continue to ask for tough measures for those who need the tough measures and the positive investments for the others who need it. I call on my colleagues opposite: Pick up the phone, phone your buddy Harper and get him to fulfill his commitments from the last election. We'll all be better off this time. When will you stand up for Ontario? It's time you stood up. We'll stand up for the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Brave words spoken by the Liberals, but look at the results: 2005, the year of the gun, the worst crime in Ontario's history. The people of Ontario know what was going on then. In 2007 the crime rate was even worse. The Liberals will give you promises, but in Ontario you want results. The Conservatives—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

Mr. Runciman has moved opposition day number 1. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour say "aye."

All those opposed say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1735 to 1745.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All those in favour, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted	Hillier, Randy	Munro, Julia
Bailey, Robert	Hudak, Tim	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Klees, Frank	Runciman, Robert W.
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLeod, Lisa	Savoline, Joyce
Elliott, Christine	Martiniuk, Gerry	Scott, Laurie
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Sterling, Norman W.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All those opposed, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Fonseca, Peter	Moridi, Reza
Albanese, Laura	Gerretsen, John	Pendergast, Leeanna
Arthurs, Wayne	Gélinas, France	Qaadri, Shafiq
Balkissoon, Bas	Hoy, Pat	Ramal, Khalil
Bentley, Christopher	Jaczek, Helena	Ramsay, David
Best, Margaret	Jeffrey, Linda	Rinaldi, Lou
Bradley, James J.	Kular, Kuldip	Ruprecht, Tony
Brown, Michael A.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sandals, Liz
Brownell, Jim	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Carroll, Aileen	Mangat, Amrit	Smitherman, George
Colle, Mike	Marchese, Rosario	Sousa, Charles
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Van Bommel, Maria
Dhillon, Vic	McMeekin, Ted	Wilkinson, John
Dickson, Joe	McNeely, Phil	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Meilleur, Madeleine	Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 18; the nays are 45.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 38, the member for Nepean—Carleton has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Deputy Premier. This matter will be debated now.

If you're leaving, leave quietly, please, except for the member for Nepean—Carleton. The member for Nepean—Carleton, you have five minutes.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate you at least staying. I see the mass exodus from the Titanic over there. I see that the Deputy Premier will not be responding to me, so I do appreciate the parliamentary assistant to the Premier being here this evening. I also want to thank you, Mr. Speaker.

You will recall that I was among the first to add my voice last week to support Premier McGuinty's fairness resolution, and I did so without hesitation. However, I take issue with the costly PR campaign that has been undertaken at the taxpayers' expense, and I am concerned

that the Liberals could now be in violation of federal law, the Canada Elections Act.

In my question and my supplementary, I raised the following points: The fairness election flyer doesn't state that it is from the province of Ontario or the government of Ontario; the PR plan wasn't shared with the opposition; the cost of the PR plan wasn't shared with the opposition; taxpayers deserve fairness, not their hard-earned tax dollars going to spin doctors; and the Liberals have become a third party in the federal election.

1750

I was disappointed that my question on cost was answered with, "The eventual cost of this, of course, can be publicly known." Surely, the minister could have shared what will be publicly known, unless the Liberals are trying to hide something or they have not budgeted for this PR campaign.

My main concern, however, is whether or not the government has registered its third party spending with Elections Canada, which very clearly has federal laws about these sorts of things.

In fact, let me read what the finance minister said today about the PR campaign that the government has launched into with a website, a petition, leaflets and lawn signs. He said, "A number of our members today were out distributing Vote for Fairness Ontario brochures at subway stations here in Toronto. Signs will be going up in different ridings."

Section 349 of the Canada Elections Act states:

"Definition of a third party

"Other group of persons acting together by mutual consent for a common purpose."

"Registration of a third party

"A third party must register immediately upon spending \$500 or more on election advertising." That's probably why they didn't want to indicate who they were on their brochures, because I'm sure they've spent more than \$500.

"Advertising must name third party

"A third party shall identify itself in any election advertising placed by it and indicate that it has authorized the advertising." Well, they certainly didn't do that on the brochure that I saw. I hope the lawn signs have it.

"Definition of 'election advertising'

"A message that is"—I'm going to paraphrase—"transmitted by any means during an election ...

"Intended to influence how an elector might vote ... including a message that takes a position on an issue..."

I again refer back to my colleague the Deputy Premier, who stated in response to my question, "We want to give all members the opportunity to take advantage of these flyers ... along with lawn signs which will help to focus this important issue of fairness in the context of the election soon to come." That, to me, sounds like a message that takes a position on an issue.

My fear is that the McGuinty Liberals, through their PR campaign, have engaged in this federal election as a third party, have exceeded the \$500 advertising limit with their website and glossy election-style brochures and, of

course, its lawn signs. Without registering as a third party with Elections Canada, the McGuinty Liberals run the risk of breaking federal law. This, of course, is not the first time that they've run that risk of working with other groups, like the Working Families Coalition. Of course, it's not the first time they've ignored the rule of law. I think of Caledonia.

I was disappointed that the Liberal government did not respond to my very legitimate question about whether they had registered with Elections Canada or not. I am disappointed that the Liberals have not, as of 5:30 p.m. today—that's just 15, 20 minutes ago—registered with Elections Canada.

Perhaps the minister was not properly briefed and could not answer yes or no to my questions at the time, but it is clear that the Liberals had not registered their PR campaign, and we do not know the cost, though we do know it far exceeds the \$500 allowable under federal election law.

So, as I conclude, how much is this campaign costing Ontario taxpayers; when is the Liberal government going to register with Elections Canada; and what are we going to do with all the brochures, all of the lawn signs, that have been printed up illegally in this province because of them? I demand answers.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Timiskaming-Cochrane.

Mr. David Ramsay: It's certainly an honour to represent the Premier in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario this evening, to respond to the member from Nepean-Carleton and her request for a second go at it, as we call it here euphemistically, "the late show"—and it's getting earlier and earlier, which is very nice.

First of all, I thank the member for her support of the principle of what the government is trying to do. What the government is trying to do is communicate to its citizens about the importance of Canadians living in Ontario being treated fairly. What we would say is that if you're a Canadian living in British Columbia or Newfoundland or the Northwest Territories or the Yukon, you should be treated the same by your federal government. That's what we're saying. We're pointing out to Ontarians that we think this is a very, very important issue. We're saying that if you're an unemployed worker in Ontario, you should be able to receive the very same benefits from your tax dollars that you pay to the federal government as a Canadian living anywhere else.

It's the same with health care. If we were to receive the \$700 million due to us in health care, think of the MRIs, the CAT scans and the new technology that we could be embracing for Ontarians that other provinces, on a per capita basis, have.

We're falling behind because we are not allowed to keep Ontario taxpayers' money on the percentage that other provinces are.

I would think that you would agree with this, that you would want to be out there with us and everybody else embracing this principle of fairness.

I ask you to join the campaign. Join the crusade, and let's get out there and talk to Ontarians so they understand how we are being ill treated by our federal government.

You have to remember, this is not a partisan issue. Our Premier was battling the Martin Liberal government before the Conservative government came on. You've got to realize that our Premier went after the Liberal government as much as he's going after this government. He's going after the federal government per se. It's the bureaucracy in Ottawa that doesn't want to move on this, and we've got to move on this. We've got to persuade all of the political parties to move the federal bureaucracy to treat Ontarians fairly. That's where we've got to go.

I'm sure you don't agree with what's happening with the election law in Ottawa that says we're not going to get a proportion of our seats in the House of Commons. Why shouldn't Ontario get its fair share of seats? I'm sure you would want to see that also, to make sure that people in your area are fairly represented in the House of Commons. We think that's important.

We want you onside. We want you to join our crusade, our battle. We'll see you out there. Let's make sure this is an issue in this federal campaign.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): This House is adjourned until 9 o'clock Thursday, October 2.

The House adjourned at 1757.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

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Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Aggelonitis, Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Attorney General / Procureur général
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Brotten, Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craiton, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby-Oshawa	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East-Cooksville / Mississauga-Est-Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / Thunder Bay-Supérieur-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora-Rainy River	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham-Kent-Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West-Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest-Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges-Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton-Springdale	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin-Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket-Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea-Gore-Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean-Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga-Brampton South / Mississauga-Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity-Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough- Westdale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa-Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa-Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound-Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East-Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est-Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (LIB)	Huron-Bruce	
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York-Simcoe	
Murdoch, Bill (IND)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough—Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres
		Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches—East York	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of International Trade and Investment / Ministre du Commerce international et de l'Investissement
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London—Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland—Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds—Grenville	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme
		Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre
		Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
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Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton—Mississippi Mills	
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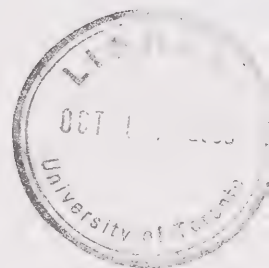
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Thursday 2 October 2008

Jeudi 2 octobre 2008

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Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 2 October 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 2 octobre 2008

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Hindu prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR DES IDÉES D'AVENIR

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 1, 2008, on the motion for second reading of Bill 100, An Act to amend the Corporations Tax Act and the Taxation Act, 2007 / Projet de loi 100, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'imposition des sociétés et la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: It's my privilege to stand here today for the one-hour leadoff, although I want to assure the members of the House that I don't think I am going to take it all. I can see the relief on the Deputy Premier's face.

I would like to preface the remarks I have with the chilling news that's been reported in today's Toronto Star. Many people will not have read it, because it's on the very last page of the business section, but it tells me everything about why we need to start investing more in our economy. In the business section, under the title "US Factories Weaken to Seven-year Low, Jobs Bleak," the body of that article talks about what is happening in the United States economy. It talks about the downward spiral that has resulted not just from the events of this past week in the stock market but from the ongoing weakness of the economy of that country over the last many, many months.

It stated for the record that some 8,000 industrial jobs were lost in the United States. In a country as large as that, that may not appear to be a huge job loss, but 8,000 really good jobs were lost in the United States in the month of September.

It went on to say that the unemployment rate in that country has now gone up to its highest level in decades, resides at about 7% and continues to grow. It goes on and, in a little-used analysis tool, it says the factory index has gone down from 49.9% in August to 43.5% in September. People may not understand this index, but it's a very simple one. It's set at 50. If things are expanding, it's above 50; if things are declining, it's below 50. In August we had a very slight decline to 49.9%, a very

small decline. In September we have a whopping decline. In September we're down to 43.5%, which is fully 6.5% below where things are normal, natural and stable.

So we can see what is happening, and for the first time there is a person you don't often hear from, but I think he said it pretty well. His name is Marc Pado, a US market strategist at Cantor Fitzgerald and Co. in San Francisco. He said, "For the first time, it's really starting to look like a recession."

Many people in Canada have been talking about that for some time. We know that jobs are being lost at a horrendous rate in the manufacturing sector in this province. We know as well that some of our key indexes, such as auto sales, have suffered hugely as factory after factory shuts down, lays off workers, or downsizes operations from three shifts to two shifts to one shift, or takes time off.

I had some opportunity recently in Oshawa to talk to some laid-off members of the Canadian Auto Workers. They had been off for months, and they are not sure if they are ever going back to work in what had been a fine job for them, a well-paying job, a good job, a steady job, a job upon which they and their families relied.

I looked as well in today's paper to see that auto sales for the Big Three in the United States have declined into the 40% range in the month of September. The only auto company that actually showed a very, very slight increase was Toyota. Every other one, including Honda, the foreign manufacturers—everything has shown huge declines in the number of people working, and as well is expected to go down. The new president of the Canadian Auto Workers, Mr. Lewenza, said it's very hard to produce cars when there are no buyers out there.

So it is against that backdrop that I look at this particular bill, Bill 100. I look at what the finance minister had to say. Of course, finance ministers are wont to talk in very flowery terms and say how wonderful their programs are, how many jobs they're going to create, and how much of everything else. This is what the finance minister had to say about this bill:

"This bill is meant to attract individuals with great ideas from all across Canada to set up their businesses in Ontario.

"It would help launch the next wave of Ontario's innovators by helping companies keep more of their income to invest and grow. It would also reinforce the critical role that universities and other public research institutes play in our economy and the next generation of jobs."

Would that that were so. Would that this bill was going to do anything of that kind. Would that this bill had

the opportunity to launch this new wave and to create tens of thousands of jobs in this province. Because, unfortunately—and sadly—this bill is not about that at all.

0910

When this bill was released, a member of our staff went to the Ministry of Finance with a very simple question. It took a day or two to answer, but the simple question was, how much is going to be expended if this bill becomes law? How much are we going to spend on trying to create jobs in the province of Ontario by use of Bill 100 and the provisions that it contains? From the outset, I have to say that this bill is not going to do very much. This bill had a potential. This bill could have done something, but the finance ministry, in setting up the parameters, has clearly indicated to me what is really going to happen. They've set aside for this fiscal year the sum of \$5 million to institute the provisions of the bill. To put that in perspective, that's about the same amount that is spent putting out flowers and maintaining this building; I think it runs around the \$5-million range. I'm happy that we put out flowers around Queen's Park. I don't want anyone to get me wrong; I'm very happy with maintaining the traditions of this building and everything that goes on in here. But that is about what's going to be spent on the creation of jobs across the length and breadth of this province under this bill. Next year, they are talking about \$7 million, which again, given the Ontario budget of closing in on \$100 billion, is an extremely, extremely small amount.

When you put that against the backdrop, what is intended here? What is intended is to get innovators to come to the province of Ontario. What is intended here is to get them to actually look at Ontario as a place to build a new industry and to bring in the smartest and the brightest and the best, and to get industry to be on top of the technological pile. But with the greatest of respect, I don't think that is going to happen given the provisions of the bill.

First of all, are companies going to come here for the \$5 million? This is the whole range of companies; are they going to come here for \$5 million? Well, you might be able to convince one company to come with \$5 million, but the amounts that are going to be given out—as we requested that too—were in the range of \$100,000 up to three quarters of a million dollars, which I think is the top level. We're looking at a very finite number of companies: 10 or 20 companies in total getting very, very insignificantly small amounts of money if they qualify for it. Quite frankly, that's not going to induce, in my opinion, very many companies to come here and start up an enterprise in this province when they could start it up literally almost anywhere else.

The tax rebate, the system that's been set up here: They're not going to have to pay taxes for some 10 years. We made some phone calls. We talked to those businesses that might potentially actually benefit from a program like this. We talked to them at some length to find out whether or not the kind of incentive that's contained within the body of this bill would actually incent

them to come to this province. They had some pretty chilling news for the researchers in our office. They said that it takes at least eight and sometimes 10 or more years to take the raw technology that is out there and that is being developed in our colleges, universities and our other places of higher learning, and turn it into a commercialized product that can be sold at a profit.

They tell us that in those eight to 10 years of a new company, they seldom pay any corporate tax. There is no tax that is paid, and therefore there will be no tax that will be rebatable. This program will not assist them, will not assist the majority of companies in bringing technology to this province. It will not make companies in the health and biotechnology sectors profitable. It will not speed up the process. It takes eight to 10 years of hard slogging to take an idea and turn it into profit. This means that a refund of the corporate taxes—zero in many, if not all, cases—won't give them extra dollars to reinvest in their business.

We questioned, why would the minister introduce a 10-year tax refund bill that won't actually help commercializers of research? The only thing we can figure out is that this is another photo opportunity for the minister and the government to talk about trying to do something in the face of the recession that is descending on us all too rapidly. It is a photo opportunity. In fact, it is not a bill that is going to do what it is meant to do.

We think that the tax breaks that aren't used don't cost the province a cent. That's why the limited budget here is a reality. That is why the government has set such a low amount—because they don't actually expect to spend anything. Ontarians are looking for far more than that. Ontarians are looking for real solutions. Ontarians are looking for real jobs, and the keeping of real jobs. They're not going to find it within the body of this bill, particularly when the amounts of money set aside are so minuscule.

We don't believe that this bill will create any jobs—I'm sad to say that. There will be little take-up on the program, and I think the minister knows that. There will be little government spending. The minister has already acknowledged that, and his staff have acknowledged that. New companies in this sector simply aren't profitable for 10 years to take advantage of what is contained in the bill. Those who invest in the new companies don't see the tax structure as a problem. They don't see the tax structure that is set up in this bill as a problem. That is not the problem to them; the problem to them is that there is not enough venture capital.

Now, we all know that venture capital flew south in the year 2000-01. That's sort of when the bubble burst, and it never really recovered from the meltdown of those years. Venture capital is not here in this province in sufficient monies to actually incent people to start up new industries, particularly to take the commercialization of new inventions and new thoughts and new processes and turn it into economic reality. The venture capital has simply dried up, and it's not there.

Now, what has been the government's response to something that would work and would create jobs? It has

been totally inadequate. They have created a \$165-million venture capital fund, which in reality is a token amount that industry insiders say will do little to help the circumstances. This measly proposal—\$5 million and \$7 million over two years—will do even less. The province could do things, but they're choosing not to.

I am, for the life of me, flummoxed and flabbergasted that the province is following a course of action to reduce the number of people who actually want to invest. There's a whole class of labour-sponsored investment funds out there—a whole class. The government's answer is to eliminate it—eliminate it. I don't know what the rationality behind all that is. It's being eliminated by the end of 2010. It was supposed to have been eliminated by this year, but the government saw fit to extend it another year or two, seeing that there was a continuing need for these funds.

I have a hard time understanding why the government would turn its back on the hundreds of millions of dollars that are available in the labour-sponsored investment funds and then come up with a bill that's going to spend \$5 million. It does not make any real economic sense to me. I'm sure it makes no economic sense to the labour-sponsored investment funds of labour unions and other progressive people who want to put their money into the economy of this province. I fail to understand the government's action. I fail to understand why former Finance Minister Sorbara was so hot to go down this road of cutting off those funds, which were probably the only thing left in venture capital after 2000-01. But he chose to do so, and the current finance minister has really not resolved that, has really not taken the steps to continue that pool of venture capital flowing. By cutting the credit, the government is signalling that it doesn't want everyday Ontarians to invest in small start-ups that create jobs in the long run. It has replaced what was a good and ongoing and meaningful policy of accepting those funds—with the tax breaks that came with them—with gimmicks. I think this bill is more of a gimmick than it is a reality. Having said that, I'm probably going to vote for it, because \$5 million is better than nothing. Anything we can do to help the economy is better than nothing, but I want everyone to realize that this is not, as my good friend from Ajax-Pickering said the other day, a cornerstone, or, as the finance minister said, a landmark. This is a very tiny, minute-natured bill that is going to do very little in terms of getting new jobs to this province.

0920

He has put the whole thing down to a photo op. I'm sure that Liberals across this province are going to run around at some point and say, "Look what we're doing; look how innovative we are; look at how we're spending \$5 million."

Hon. George Smitherman: Celebrating Ontario.

Mr. Michael Prue: Celebrating Ontario with \$5 million.

As my good friend and colleague from the former riding of Erie-Lincoln—I believe it's now Niagara West—Glanbrook—said so well yesterday, they are

spending some \$8 million on a tourism study. I guess it's a good thing to spend \$8 million on a tourism study, but it's quite obvious that what this is intended to do is minor in comparison, because the amount that is being spent is a great deal less.

This government has decided to put commercialization photo ops before the real high-tech growth policies. It's unfortunate, because the industry has put real proposals on the table. I certainly know from estimates last week. We had an opportunity, over many hours, to question the Minister of Innovation, and he was really quite excited about many of the innovative proposals that have been put forward. We're excited about those too. But the McGuinty Liberals have virtually ignored them all, prioritizing press releases and quick announcements. I think it's a shame, but I'm going to vote for this bill, and I'm sure my caucus will support me in voting for this bill, because we need to send this bill to committee. We need to send it to committee, and we need to get some assurances on many fronts.

One of the fronts that was raised by the Progressive Conservatives is that the innovation that is taking place can take place in places other than institutes of higher education, that it can take place in places other than universities, community colleges and other think tanks, that it can take place in a whole broad range of institutions and government and non-government services, and that they too should be included.

I'd like to take the other tack, because I think we need to discuss in committee the purpose of this bill and whether in fact it is heading in the right direction. I say that because we continue, in the New Democratic Party, to believe in basic research: the scientific study done to create new knowledge for the purpose of learning or finding truth. We believe in basic research. We believe in that because we think that is every bit as important as the commercialization of that research. We go back in Ontario and even to the University of Toronto—one of my two alma maters—and we have a look at the success of scientific research at the University of Toronto. Six Nobel Prize recipients have come out of that university—six of them.

Ms. Laurie Scott: That's amazing. Wow.

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes, six who have developed independent and scientific knowledge which was not commercialized. It was done for the pure benefit of science, for the basic research. Now, obviously some of that went on to be commercialized—Banting, with the discovery of insulin. He discovered it not for a commercialized purpose, but for the benefit of all mankind. That's what he did it for. I don't even believe he made any money off it. He didn't try to patent it. He didn't try to do anything else in terms of the insulin. He simply discovered it, worked on it, gave it away and benefited everyone. We believe, and continue to believe, in basic research.

The name RIM is talked about a lot in this province, particularly by people from the Kitchener-Waterloo area. It has been a huge success story—BlackBerries and all

the things that flowed out of that. I think we should be listening to people like Mike Lazaridis, the founder of Research In Motion, whom this government often trots out. I believe this bill is hoping to find another RIM; that's what it is, isn't it? My friend here shakes his head in ponderment, but I believe it is.

This is what Mike Lazaridis, the founder of Research In Motion, said about basic research; I think he said it very well: "The number one reason to fund basic research well and with vision is to attract the very best researchers from around the world. Once here, they can prepare Canada's next generations of graduates, masters, PhDs and post-doctorates, including the finest foreign students. All else flows from this." He went on to say that commercialization will happen—Canadian researchers will use the high-quality education, well-funded laboratories and their international contacts to design commercial applications to their discoveries—but it's a natural progression and doesn't need to be forced.

So I think we have to also question: If we are content with this bill and believe it is being done for the production of jobs, that's one thing. But if we also want to look at the other path, which I think is equally valuable in places like universities and educational institutions, it is to help fund them not only so they can benefit the private sector and the companies that are going to proceed with jobs, but also for the sheer joy of the basic research. It is for the foundation, so that the schools can develop and we can bring in the best and the brightest, not just to the places of employment but to the places in the university where they can study, where they can trade ideas, where they can meet with people from around the world, where we can have an intellectual hub. I believe this bill doesn't do that, and this bill should be doing that. It should be part of the bill that I'm hoping will be talked about in committee.

This province is putting a significant amount of resources into the commercialization plan with this bill and with others. They have put over a billion dollars on the table, telling researchers that there will be rewards for finding commercial applications for their findings. This is money that could go, and in part should go, to basic research.

We must ask ourselves, what discoveries are we sacrificing by diverting funds from this basic research? As I said earlier, we're trying to recreate a new Research In Motion, I guess. But that's not the way companies get started. It begins with smart people working in high-class institutions with top-notch professors, seeking answers to questions they may not have fully developed.

So the whole thing comes down to this: Is this bill sufficient to reach the commercialization of new ideas and create jobs in Ontario? The answer, quite simply, is no. It is set up in a way that companies are probably not going to get any money for eight to 10 years because of the tax regime that is set up with it, because they don't make any profit in those first eight to 10 years. Is this bill going to resolve the difficulties inherent between basic research and applied research? Probably not, and it's

probably not going to help the institutes of higher education, because they need to develop the ideas first, as Mr. Lazaridis so brilliantly put it—that's the first step, which has been omitted by this bill.

Is the government going to be spending enough money in this bill to make its application work? I would suggest that \$5 million this year and \$7 million next year is a pittance and is not going to bring the best and the brightest from around the world to develop here. It is not the kind of money that will make someone choose Toronto over San Francisco or Ottawa over Berlin; it's just not going to happen. It is not a realistic amount of money for the government to put forward.

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In a nutshell it all comes down to sending this bill to committee, to having the government look at it again, putting the resources into it and changing where the research money can come from.

I accept what my friends in the Progressive Conservative Party have to say in terms of other research facilities not being included. I hope they and the government will accept what I have to say around basic research, about funding the universities to look at things that may not be immediately commercially applicable. In the end, I'm hoping, when everyone has a chance, to make this bill into something that today it is not: a vehicle to produce jobs in this province.

We know that the people of Ontario are potentially in for hard times. We know what is happening in the United States and what has happened for the last several years across the length and breadth of this province, where manufacturing jobs are being shredded and shed on a huge and ongoing basis, where towns like Goderich woke up yesterday to the news that—

Ms. Laurie Scott: Five hundred.

Mr. Michael Prue: —500 of their best-paying jobs in their largest factory and their largest commercial warehouse are being shut down. That's really going to do damage to a town of 7,500 people. We know that that same thing has happened in Windsor, in Chatham, in London, in Welland, in Ottawa and in Toronto. We know that. I believe that every member of this House from every party has the obligation to do what we can to help create new wealth.

This bill, if amended, might be part of the solution. This bill, as it is presently constituted, will do very little. So, I await the government and I await everyone else, and I trust that they will send this to committee for review and will listen carefully to amendments that come forward to strengthen it so that it actually can do what the minister set out in his lofty goal to do. It will take resolve, and it will take money, and it will take ingenuity, but together I think this Legislature has an obligation to the people of this province to do something in these times of economic uncertainty and do it well.

With about half an hour, I think that's about all I need to say today. I look forward to further debate at third reading, when I can stand and talk about the successes of the committee process and how the government has

listened and done far more than use this present bill, in its course of action, as a photo op.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I listened to the member from Beaches–East York speak, for almost half an hour, about Bill 100. I was happy to see the member's kind of support in the end, because I think it's a very important step on a very important issue.

I was listening to him carefully when he was talking about researchers and scientists, and I agree with him: When people come to do research and science in Ontario, they don't look at the money; they do it because they love it, because they believe in it and because they want to serve humanity. Over the years, I met many different researchers from the University of Western Ontario and listened to them. They talk about their issues with passion and with love, because they care about their jobs and about their ideas. They want to implement them; they want to serve humanity. That's why I think this bill is a very important step to allow many researchers and innovators to come to Ontario to execute their innovative ideas.

He spoke about the money part. He knows very well that the money part is not the only element of the bill—he is a well-experienced politician; he has been around for many years. Most of the time, money is not the only thing; it's the rules and regulations that allow people to come and practise—it's very important when you break all the rules and regulations, all the barriers to people implementing ideas and their research.

I think this bill is a cornerstone for many researchers and innovators to come to this beautiful province, implement their ideas and benefit the whole of humanity.

He mentioned many different things and he knows our government's not just taking this economic challenge lightly. We do it in many different steps. I mentioned yesterday the innovation fund—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I would like to congratulate the member for Beaches–East York, the future leader of the NDP. Oh, I'm premature on that, I suppose.

He made an excellent point, that in the first six, eight, or 10 years start-up companies don't pay any taxes. So a tax rebate for a company that does not pay taxes is redundant. It's the kind of legislation that this government loves to bring in, something that gives them a photo op, something that gives them some press on this type of thing, but that has absolutely no results. It's either a hoax that they brought in this legislation, or they haven't thought through the process, they haven't thought through the effect of this. It's been poorly thought out, like so much of the legislation that they've brought in.

Don Drummond, vice president of the TD Bank, put out his analysis of the Ontario economy last week. There are some excellent pieces in that publication that talk about the direction that this government could be going in, what it could be doing to help the industry and com-

merce of this province. We don't see any of those kinds of things coming through this government.

Another point that the member made was that the venture capital and the angel financing of these start-up companies is where most of the new high-tech developments come from. They don't come out of major university learning centres. They come from people's garages. They come from small organizations that have a good idea. That's where Microsoft came from, that's where Dell came from, that's where so many of the places came from. They are being excluded in this legislation in this piece of legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Pat Hoy: I'm pleased to enter into this debate on Bill 100 once again. Our government has a five-point plan for the economy, and the opposition has often insinuated that they are not too sure what it is. This is part of it. It is part of our innovation strategy. It includes investing or creating an environment for innovation. The opposition often asks for tax cuts. Under this particular plan, a qualifying corporation would be exempt from Ontario corporate income tax and corporate minimum tax for the first 10 years—a fulsome 10 years. We are looking at new jobs and the next generation of jobs, and bringing those jobs here to Ontario. This is what the design of Bill 100 is all about.

We're talking about a new generation of ideas. We're looking for those innovators who will come to Ontario with fresh new ideas—totally new and unknown to any of us at the current point in time. What this bill would allow for is that the exemption would apply to corporations that commercialize intellectual property in priority areas, such as, but not limited to, the bio-economy, clean technologies, advanced health technologies, telecommunications, and computer and digital technologies.

Now, there's much to be said about this bill, but the intellectual property has to be developed in the course of study or employment at a qualified institute by one or more individuals. I don't see anything particularly wrong with that. It should not ever have been owned by another entity or one or more individuals other than the qualifying institute, including its students or employees—the qualifying corporation. What we have here is a total package of new and innovative ideas that we are seeking—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?
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Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to comment on the speech delivered by the member from Beaches–East York about Bill 100, Ideas for the Future Act. I had the pleasure of sitting with the member from Beaches–East York in committee when we were asking the Minister of Research and Innovation some questions about the ministry.

One part, of course, was about what is now Bill 100, the Ideas for the Future Act: Who qualifies? How will it help? Have you got anybody who has applied, or when

you go out—I believe we’ve been to San Diego—to the conventions out there? Is this something that people from all parts of the world are looking at and saying, “Hey, let’s go to Ontario. This is going to be a break for us”? He seems to think—

Hon. George Smitherman: It’s a piece of the puzzle.

Ms. Laurie Scott: It is?

It is certainly the headlines, the names of the bill—the minister does speak at length in committee, I have to say, in answering questions; he does have very long answers that are sometimes circuitous—but it is another photo op. The names are all good; the spin is good. What is actually going to be produced? What is the accountability? Is there going to be enough incentive?

Certainly, Ontario needs more solutions. We’ve had a rough economic patch. You can go on and on about the manufacturing sectors. There isn’t enough venture capital out there.

Also, the member from Beaches–East York was very correct in speaking about qualifying institutions, and why is it so narrow? When qualifying institutions, you exclude intellectual property developed outside the universities, colleges, non-profits and hospitals. Why is that so? That is a question that I’m going to speak about at length later on, but I congratulate the member from Beaches–East York.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Response?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened to my colleagues, and I thank all of them: the members from London–Fanshawe, Halton, Chatham–Kent–Essex, and Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. I think they all listened intently, because they all actually spoke about things that I had tried to raise in the bill.

For the member from Chatham–Kent Essex, though: I have heard the five-point plan. We have heard almost nothing but the five-point plan from the government benches since this Legislature returned, but I’m not sure that the five-point plan is working.

Every day, when I open up the newspaper, I see plants shutting down. Every day, I read about towns like Goderich, Welland, Ottawa, Smiths Falls and everything else, and the loss of jobs in those locations. The member talked about how the great, grand attempt of this bill was to exempt new companies for a period of 10 years of taxes. I don’t think he heard what I had to say, and I think perhaps he doesn’t understand what the ministry is trying to say: that these companies, in most cases, don’t pay taxes for the first 10 years of their involvement. They are start-up companies. They must, by the purpose of this legislation, be start-up companies; they can’t be existing companies.

They are brand new ones who come out with an idea, who try to get the venture capital, who try to put the nub of an idea into a commercialized product, and in the overwhelming majority of cases pay no taxes for the first eight to 10 years of their development, and in some cases longer. There is very little tax incentive here for them, and that’s the point that I was trying to make. If the gov-

ernment wants to incent them, it can’t be through this process. It must be perhaps a process of grants or something else, but not in reducing taxes which they already don’t pay.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I will be sharing my time with the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

I’m pleased to join the debate today as it relates to Bill 100. I am happy to support Bill 100. We have been hearing for months now about the challenges that our economy has been facing. Soaring energy costs and the rising Canadian dollar have placed unprecedented pressure on Ontario’s economy. More recently, we have all watched events unfolding in the United States that have had negative impacts on Canadians, particularly those of us here in Ontario. We are facing some difficulties, no doubt, but I am proud to be a part of a government that is willing to take decisive action that will lead this province through the challenges that we face. That is what this bill is about.

If passed, Bill 100 will help attract individuals from all over the country to Ontario by providing a tax incentive to qualifying corporations to further the commercial strength of intellectual property. In short, this bill is about bringing innovative individuals from all over Canada to Ontario, which will strengthen our economy as we move forward.

I would like to take a moment to talk about an exciting company in my riding of Mississauga–Brampton South called 6N Silicon Inc. 6N Silicon has developed an exciting new method that uses silicon to turn the sun’s energy into clean solar power. This process reduces the cost of the material and will help encourage the adoption and growth of solar power in Ontario.

The ideas behind 6N Silicon were first identified by Scott Nichol and were developed right here in Ontario. In short, this is exactly the type of idea and business that Bill 100 will help to attract in the future.

The Ontario government recently announced a major investment in 6N Silicon which will help them build a new manufacturing plant in Vaughan and will help create 84 new jobs for the people of Ontario.

As we move forward into the future, it is very important to ensure that Ontario is able to compete in a global economy. One way to do so is by finding new ways to help innovative companies thrive. We are proud of our investments in our training, colleges and universities, and I have no doubt that many innovative ideas are being developed in many of Ontario’s colleges and universities even as I speak.

These ideas are what will create the jobs of the future, which is why it is so important that we do everything we can to ensure that these ideas emerge from the classrooms and are put into practice.

This is what Bill 100 is about. It provides a direct incentive to firms that undertake the challenges of commercializing intellectual property, and it will also give these types of companies a refund of all Ontario corporate in-

come tax to reinvest in their businesses and ultimately to create jobs.

I am proud of the culture of innovation that exists in my riding of Mississauga–Brampton South. I have already mentioned 6N Silicon, but I have also met with representatives from 2Source and Amgen Canada, which are examples of companies that are playing leading roles in promoting research and development in my riding. These types of companies are creating well-paying jobs for my constituents and people throughout the province. This is why I am proud to be a part of a government that supports these types of innovators, particularly in these challenging economic times. This is also why I am proud to support Bill 100.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Let me thank the member for Mississauga–Brampton South for sharing her time with me today, and offer a few comments Bill 100 at second reading.

As others have mentioned today already, we talk on a regular basis and are proud on a regular basis to remind people in the province of Ontario about our five-point plan, and one of the planks in that plan is, of course, innovation. That's what we're discussing here today. That is in large part what Bill 100 is about.

For me personally, I can tell you on this front that I began to develop my personal interest in this issue some four years ago. Shortly after the election in 2003, I was appointed to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. One of the particular topics for review that year, as chosen by the Provincial Auditor, was a program that no longer exists in the province of Ontario. The program was the old Ontario Innovation Trust. I think it had somewhere in the order of magnitude of \$700 million or \$800 million on an annual basis put into that particular program. As I've mentioned, that was one of the programs that we reviewed at public accounts that year.

As we reviewed it at public accounts, I came to learn of the magnitude of the financial resource that was put into it on an annual basis, and I remember particularly one day when we were in committee reviewing this particular program and offering some questions and some comments on my observation that most, if not all, of the resource regularly, annually, on a 100% basis ended up being committed and spent in southern Ontario. I posed the question at committee to the clerk, other members and the Chair as to why it was that none of this money ever found its way out of, for the most part, the GTA. It did migrate somewhat out of the GTA, but was for the most part centred here; as I've said, \$700 million to \$800 million on an annual basis.

I remember the comment very clearly that came back to me from one of the other members on the committee who, as it turns out, has become the federal finance minister. He was a bit surprised by my question and he said, almost in a very disparaging way, "Well, because that's where the researchers are." My comment back to

him was, "Well, you know, I think the researchers will follow the money." In other words, I was there advocating on behalf of my community, Thunder Bay–Atikokan, and other communities in the province of Ontario that we needed to find a way to spread some of this resource around, that we could use this resource to establish different economies in other parts of the province. That was about four years ago.

Then what happened very quickly and in short order is that we saw the Premier develop a new ministry called the Ministry of Research and Innovation. He seized upon that, I think, at a very—it was a very wise move. In fact, recognizing the importance of the establishment of this new ministry, the Premier appointed himself as the first minister of the Ministry of Research and Innovation. Now we have Minister Wilkinson at the helm. The money that used to land in the Ontario Innovation Trust found its way into the Ministry of Research and Innovation.

The reason I offer that background is that I think it's very important. My comments at public account four years earlier had now fortunately found themselves to almost have some life in terms of way our government was moving forward and looking at the use of that resource. As the member from Mississauga–Brampton South has just mentioned, I have some wonderful examples in my own riding of the success and what we can do to expand economies and to create new economies in other parts of the province.

So the focus and the criticism, as I've said, have been specifically on this bill and its innovative qualities. I've listened to what the member of the third party had to say and some of the shorter criticisms from the members of the second party, the official opposition, but our work on innovation is much broader than what is simply contained in this bill.

In my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, I can quote for you quickly four or five tremendous examples. Number one: We developed the Atikokan Bio-Energy Research Centre. In the budget of 2006, I believe it was, the finance minister announced a commitment of \$4 million. Speaker, I can tell you that already we are beginning to see the results, the potential for a lot of good to come to my communities as a result of that commitment of \$4 million of resource. A lot of that resource—at least half of that \$4 million, if not more—is money that is being spent at Lakehead University in my riding, and also at Confederation College in my riding. I'm very fortunate to have both a university and a college in my riding. So there's an example of research money that formerly never would have found its way outside of the GTA now being spent in northern communities, creating jobs and being innovative in terms of the industries that it has to look at.

We've heard very recently that there is some potentially very positive news that can come out of the work that the Atikokan Bio-Energy Research Centre is doing, along with OPG, in terms of the potential for using biomass in our coal plants. It's a wonderful example of what we can do when we're innovative, when we broaden our scope and open our minds to the possibilities.

Genesis Genomics is a little company that was established about four years ago in Thunder Bay. A fellow I've known for a long time, Bob Thayer, an old high school football coach of mine, decided he was going to establish a biotech company in Thunder Bay when most people thought he had to be crazy, and he did it. I'm very proud that we supported, through programs in our government, the establishment of Genesis Genomics in Thunder Bay. It's a company that is developing precursor technology to identify cancers in people before they actually develop the cancer. That little company in Thunder Bay is already commercializing product. They're doing it in Thunder Bay, and they did it with help from our government in terms of financial resource.

There is a paleo-DNA lab established in Thunder Bay that has received support from our government. That paleo-DNA lab received international recognition when they did the work at their lab in Thunder Bay to identify the last unidentified body from the Titanic. The person, I think, was buried in New Brunswick or Nova Scotia. That work was done in Thunder Bay.

These are two very large and successful enterprises occurring in Thunder Bay. Innovative work is happening in our community as a result of financial resource committed by our government to the establishment of these things in my neck of the woods.

The Molecular Medicine Research Centre, in partnership with Sunnybrook, out of Toronto: \$15 million of financial resource from our government into the ridings of Thunder Bay—Atikokan and Thunder Bay—Superior North for the establishment of a molecular medicine research centre. When would that have happened before? What government would have considered doing that?

When we took the money from the Ontario Innovation Trust and took the control of \$700 million or \$800 million of resource away from that group and brought it into government under the Ministry of Research and Innovation, that's when we had the opportunity to start flowing some of that resource to other parts of the province. It's having very real and tangible results for my community.

The Molecular Medicine Research Centre has now become the Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute, still in partnership with Sunnybrook. Just last week, we had a wonderful announcement: They are beginning their work with what is the newest wave of diagnostic technology, called HIFU, high-intensity focused ultrasound. We've just announced two machines in Thunder Bay—one here and one in Sunnybrook; I'm not sure—with the announcement of 30 jobs in Thunder Bay associated with that development: high-tech, knowledge-based, growing-the-economy, diversifying-the-economy kinds of jobs that ridings like mine have needed and longed for, for a long time. We've always said this work can be done anywhere, and we're proving it can be done anywhere.

Those are four examples of what we've done on innovation.

In the budget of 2007, we announced CRIBE, an acronym for the Centre for Research and Innovation in the Bioeconomy: a \$25-million commitment through the

Ministry of Research and Innovation into my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan. I'm pleased to be sitting currently on a task force that is developing the terms of reference for that project. We are close to having that report finished. It will go to the Minister of Research and Innovation, and from that point we will move forward. A \$25-million commitment. Huge. The potential there for job creation in Thunder Bay—Atikokan is enormous, and I'm very excited about that.

These are all examples of what we've done just in my riding, and I'm sure many of the other members around the room have similar examples that they could share with us if they had an opportunity to speak on this.

We've hired two research chairs in Thunder Bay and provided resource for 300 more graduate students at Lakehead University—just a tremendous amount of work going on in innovation.

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As I said earlier, I have listened to a bit of the criticism from the Conservative side on this particular piece. It's interesting to listen. I, like many others, came into this place with a municipal council background. When we came in, in 2003, of the 103 of us I think 38 or so of us had a municipal background, and many of us, as first-timers in 2003, brought that municipal experience to this place. When we came in in 2003, what we also brought with us was a history of having a relationship, if you could call it that, with the Harris government. Many of us ran as a result of that lack of a relationship, I should say, with the Harris government. We witnessed probably the biggest tax shift in the history of the province, if not the history of the country, when they downloaded incredible amounts of responsibility onto the back of the municipal residential property taxpayer.

What I want to mention is what they did, because the Conservatives like to remind you that they are the great tax fighters. I come from Thunder Bay—Atikokan. In 1997-98, many people will remember, there was this big change in responsibilities for the education tax and the province taking over some responsibilities. They left northern Ontario behind. They had fully five or six years to address the inequities that existed in the business education tax rate, which became their responsibility. There were huge inequities in that tax rate in northern Ontario relative to southern Ontario. That wasn't their fault; that was the way it had evolved over years when the school boards had taxing authority. But when that changed and it came back under the auspices and authority of the Conservative government, they did nothing to level the playing field. So for the six or eight years that their government existed, they did not touch the business education tax rates. As such, businesses in northern Ontario were severely punished and taxed in a much heavier manner than similar businesses all across the rest of the province. Our government came in and fixed it. Not only are we making the playing field level; we are accelerating the reductions on the business education tax side for northern Ontario businesses, to bring it more into line.

My time is running out here, but I do want to read one piece that was in today's Thunder Bay Source about—

you could say that perhaps this is stretching it a bit on the innovation side, but not so much. This was in the Thunder Bay Source today: "Turbine Ready to Work at Terrace Bay Mill." As many will remember, this mill closed about three or four years ago. Our government, through our forestry programs—and we've brought a tremendous amount of resources to this sector. There are success stories in the forestry sector today even though, as we all know, there are incredible challenges. It reads like this:

"More than a year after its groundbreaking ceremony, a \$45-million condensing steam turbine is ready to be fired up at the Terrace Bay pulp mill."

I should mention that there are about 400 people working in that mill today who wouldn't have been without this program.

"The turbine will generate enough power to make the mill self-sufficient in terms of electrical energy, which makes up a large portion of the company's manufacturing costs.

"Buchanan Forest Products vice-president Hartley Multamaki said the company is expected to realize millions of dollars a year in savings.

"Wood by-products will fire the turbine

"Terrace Bay Mayor Mike King said the start-up is great news for the community.

"The provincial government kicked in \$22.5 million from the forest sector prosperity fund for this project.

"Hundreds of mill workers lost their jobs when Nee-nah Paper halted operations in 2006. Today, the facility is owned by Buchanan Forest Products and employs about 350 people," as it says here in the article.

That's an example of what we did on innovation through our forestry programs to incent forest sector companies that are still operating in Ontario to take on some responsibility, make long-term investments in their mills and in their communities, and we would help them to do that.

So I think we've got lots to be proud of on the innovation front beyond just the scope of the bill that we're here discussing today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'm pleased to rise and comment just briefly on what I've heard from the member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan and the member for Mississauga—Brampton South, and particularly with reference to the stories that we've heard from my colleague from Thunder Bay—Atikokan. We all have stories in our ridings about innovation and good work on the part of industry, and I don't quarrel with those at all. However, I also heard about what our government may or may not have done a million years ago. What matters is what's going on now and what's happened in the last five years. This is the watch of the McGuinty government.

So while the stories are interesting and while it is hard for me not to support—

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe the member for Thornhill is not in his seat while he's speaking.

Mr. Peter Shurman: That is correct.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. I hadn't noticed that. Perhaps you'd like to move to your seat.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Mr. Speaker, with apologies, and to my colleague over here, I hadn't noticed I wasn't in my seat either.

However, to continue my point briefly, it's hard not to support a bill like this, and so I'm sure that we will. But wouldn't it be nice, given the state of the economy, on a very broad basis, and very particularly in Ontario, to see to it that in a bill like this we take a broader approach and not look at things like a 10-year tax exemption for a relative few number of companies and, rather, look at a larger number of companies. I think that over time, and in discussion, if the members of the government are serious about addressing the needs of Ontario from an innovative perspective, they'll take some pointers from all parties and work co-operatively with us because this bill could be a very good bill if we bother to put the amendments in that are required to really see to the innovative abilities of Ontarians and the companies that we together operate, or could operate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened again intently to the two speakers, and just on the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan: I listened and, yes, he was talking about new technologies and how they're being implemented in the riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan, but I fail to see how they address the meat or the purpose of this bill. The companies that he mentioned are all existing companies, therefore they are not eligible under this bill. They're not eligible, and they are not developing technology, they are using technology. Somebody else developed the technology that they are now using.

I commend them for using new technology, as we all do. I commend the members of this House for using BlackBerries which five years ago they didn't use. I commend people across this nation for using technologies that weren't there but somebody developed them.

There was a show on TV last night on the CBC about the pulsing windshield washer and how the guy had developed that. You know, he developed that and now we all use it. But that's not what this bill is about. With the greatest of respect, the companies he talked about are not new, they're not eligible, they're not developing the technology and they have nothing to do whatsoever with this bill.

My colleague, the other speaker, mentioned the resource or the industry—and I forget the name of it at this point—in her own riding. It's "silicon something." With the greatest of respect to that one too, it is not a company that would be eligible for the funding. They're already up and operating and it's not going to happen for them either.

So with respect, I don't know what the examples are supposed to prove, but they don't prove that the members who spoke on this bill are speaking to the bill, and that's the problem I have with it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: Just having been in committee under estimates and having Minister Wilkinson go through what this government intends and what his program is for research and innovation in this province, I think it's a whole new cultural change. It hasn't happened all at once. It's something that was going on when the Premier was the Minister of Research and Innovation for the first year. I was very pleased in estimates to hear this because one of the shortcomings in Ontario and in Canada is that we do great research, of course, but then the commercialization of that good research—where it becomes real jobs—is not occurring. That's the expensive part. People say, "That research is only maybe 5% of the problem. The big part of the cost and the big part of the risks are in that commercialization."

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This new legislation, this act, proposes a 10-year exemption for new corporations and commercial intellectual property developed by qualified Canadian universities, Canadian colleges, Ontario Centres of Excellence, and other such research institutes. It's looking at those jobs that we haven't been getting. It's trying to incent the commercialization of our excellent research. This is going to really work in Ontario. These are the things we have to do, and I think that every community—Ottawa is a big high-tech area: We've got two great universities and the National Research Council. So we have to get together in teams. We're going to have to have businesses helping these institutions.

But to have a 10-year tax credit—any businessman likes that—is going to be a great incentive, and this is going to work for Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to comment on the comments from the members for Mississauga–Brampton South and Thunder Bay–Atikokan. I just want to share with everybody that the member from Thornhill is comfortable in whatever seat he's in on this side of the Legislature.

The member for Beaches–East York is correct. I'm sure we're all very proud of the innovations and the developments that have occurred in our ridings, and I've sat in estimates and heard the member for Mississauga–Brampton South speak proudly of the developments in her riding. But Bill 100 does not help them qualify. It does not apply to existing businesses or the merger of two existing businesses. It's no incentive for existing businesses to commercialize new intellectual property. It's not there.

You say this is a tax exemption. Really, you're going to have to fill out a lot of forms, a lot of paperwork, and then you get a rebate back on this bill. It's going to be, as my colleague for Beaches–East York mentioned, a lot of years before you get to this point. We're happy that it's a tax break, you could say, for the future, but again, to highlight the fact that it doesn't apply to existing busi-

nesses. There were no incentives for existing businesses mentioned by my colleagues across the way.

At least they're trying to get down the right path, the Liberal government, in giving some tax breaks, but I can't say that this is going to be the cornerstone or the landmark that the Liberal government is trying to portray. It's photo ops and good headlines, but really the proof will be in the pudding, and it's not an incentive we—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. A response?

Mr. Bill Mauro: Again, I want to thank the member for Mississauga–Brampton South for sharing her time with me and also the members for Thornhill, Beaches–East York, Ottawa–Orléans, and Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

There have been many people here in the Legislature who have spoken specifically to this bill and what it is that we think it's going to help to accomplish here in the province of Ontario. We're very proud of the bill. We think it's absolutely a step in the right direction.

I'm happy to hear, as well, that it sounds like members of the official opposition and of the third party intend to fully support this bill. I think the fact that they're going to support it speaks to the fact that there is a lot of good in this bill. I guess I shouldn't presume that their entire caucuses are going to support the bill, but certainly those who were here in the chamber this morning have indicated that they will support the bill. I think that speaks fully to the fact that Bill 100, the Ideas for the Future Act, is in fact a good thing.

In my 15 minutes or so, I did think, though, it was very important that we remind the people of the province of Ontario that what our government has done on innovation is much broader than what is simply contained within Bill 100, the Ideas for the Future Act. In my remarks, I listed several examples of work that we have done in this particular sector that has significantly aided the community that I come from, Thunder Bay–Atikokan, and I'm very proud of those particular ideas.

This is a good bill. It apparently has the vote and support of all three parties as we go forward. I think that speaks in and of itself to the fact that this is a good piece of legislation, but I also do think that it's very important that the people of the province of Ontario understand that what we're doing on innovation in this province is much broader and already has been for years much broader than simply what is contained in this piece of legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: It's good to be here on this Thursday morning, October 2. I'm pleased to follow up on yesterday's leadoff from my colleague from Niagara West–Glanbrook, who is the lead on Bill 100, the so-called Ideas for the Future Act, 2008. I'm pleased to follow the leadoff of my colleague from Niagara West–Glanbrook yesterday on Bill 100, the so-called Ideas for the Future Act, 2008.

I mentioned earlier this morning in some of my comments that we had the Minister of Research and Innov-

ation in estimates—I think we broke it up into three different times, but for a lot of hours of questions. We were probing him about the various directions that he feels Ontarians need to go. One of the areas we were questioning on in the committee was based around the topic that we're discussing today; this is part of it. When we first started estimates, this bill had not been introduced; although it was outlined in the budget in 2008, this actual bill didn't come in until last week.

The Minister of Research and Innovation had been spending a lot of time talking about the so-called tax exemption since becoming the minister. And as I say, he talks at length in estimates. Not only do the Liberal ministers spend so much time and taxpayers' money making such announcements and re-announcements, posing for all those photo ops that go on, now we see the Liberal ministers spend a lot of time and taxpayers' money making announcements on policies that they hadn't introduced until last week; yet this started in the budget back in the spring.

After the minister went on for a few minutes about tax exemptions, I asked the Minister of Research and Innovation, Minister Wilkinson, about how many applications his ministry had received for this program, hoping that he would be able to attract businesses under this so-called 10-year corporate income tax holiday. The response was maybe surprising, to say the least. The technical details of this bill will be in the fall budgetary bill, so they're really not available as of yet. Not surprisingly, this was another Liberal minister who feels it isn't subject to a measure of performance. I quote the minister: "I don't see, really, where we are at this stage that we can show results." It sounds kind of familiar coming from the government side of the Legislature. This is how we measure; let's see our results. God forbid accountability and results be part and parcel of the Liberal policy over there.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Oh, Lordy.

Ms. Laurie Scott: See? Now I'm getting a response. I was just waiting for some more responses from the other side of the Legislature about headlines and photo ops. Just making sure you're awake over there. But photo ops and headlines aren't measures of success. It's about more than just ink and papers and websites.

Let me provide another example of what the Minister of Research and Innovation said. A program referred to as the Next Generation of Jobs Fund: We heard the minister go on about this right here in the Legislature, with stops along the tour of Ontario for photo ops and press releases. My colleagues in the Legislature on the Liberal benches over there will be surprised as well to hear that the number of jobs created under programs in the Next Generation of Jobs Fund is not a criterion for success. So believe it or not, the number of jobs created is not an official criterion for programs under the Next Generation of Jobs Fund. "Jobs" is right here in the title: Next Generation of Jobs Fund. But job creation is not a criterion.

So you're applying, you go through the paperwork, and you say, "How many jobs are you going to create?"

It's not a criterion. They don't really even ask that. So the government spends millions and millions of taxpayer dollars on programs under this fund, yet feels the very focus of what it's about—creation of jobs—just isn't something that bears the focus for them. As my colleague the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook said at the top of his remarks yesterday, this is a Liberal government that is "weighed down by ideology that says government bureaucrats and politicians are better at picking winners and losers than the markets or full-time, experienced investors."

So I think it's safe to say Ontarians should be concerned when, according to Bill 100, the Minister of Research and Innovation, who is the main guy—he's the guy who is going to basically pick the winners and the losers of those companies that come to him in the hopes of benefiting from the tax reductions offered. Ontarians should be concerned when the minister himself has indicated that other programs in his ministry, which are given titles to infer that they are creating jobs for the future, don't have job creation as the criterion for a measurement of success, which is shocking, but it leads me to another point I'd like to get on the record.

1020

Obviously, a program such as would be formed through Bill 100 is going to require administration—significant administration. Administration requires staff, requires salaries, requires benefits, requires offices—it goes on and on. But it costs a lot of money for the taxpayers. We, on this side of the Legislature anyway, believe that taxpayers' money should be used prudently. This makes even more sense after hearing the loss of faith of the Premier this week when he delivered the obituary for manufacturing and jobs in this province.

You may recall that up until October of last year, the Ministry of Research and Innovation was housed by the Premier's office. The 2007-08 budget for the Ministry of Research and Innovation—let's not forget this wasn't a stand-alone ministry until just a number of months ago—shows salaries, wages and employee benefits at well over \$10.8 million. Also of note is a 33% increase in employees over \$100,000. When we asked in estimates, I believe there were 137 employees in the ministry. So that's just shy of \$11 million. That's taxpayers' money; it doesn't come out of thin air. This appears to be—

Hon. George Smitherman: You're on that list.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm talking about the Ministry of Research and Innovation—a ministry budget that's growing immensely. I'm just connecting the dots of this bureaucratic paperwork and increased expenses that are going to occur with this bill.

I realize the Minister of Research and Innovation will tell us that the programs that fall under his perusal are a reallocation of resources from other ministries. So I wonder if the Premier—or one of his ministers, for that matter—would provide us with a breakdown of what programs were severed from other ministries to form this Ministry of Research and Innovation. It's pretty hard to follow all these trails. We've talked about silos in minis-

tries, and the Minister of Research and Innovation has said he wants more of a horizontal approach, but there have been cuts from other ministries, he says, to go into the Ministry of Research and Innovation. I just wondered if at some point we're going to be able to follow that trail and get that breakdown, and I wonder if the budgets for those particular programs are the same. Have they increased? Certainly, as I've commented, the overall ministry budget has increased significantly.

Let's also look at how Ontario's tax rate on new business investment compares to other Canadian provinces. We've said this for so long, and the present Liberal government doesn't seem to get it, but Ontario has the highest marginal effective tax rate on business investment not just in Canada, but in the developed world. It's astounding—the highest marginal effective tax rate on business in the developed world. A province that should be doing everything it can to encourage investment, a province that should be doing everything it can to tell would-be investors, "Come on over. We've got a business climate and tax structure you need to feel good about in laying down your dollars and creating jobs," instead of doing those things, is telling people, "Hey, come on over because we're a Liberal government. We want your tax dollars. As a matter of fact, we want them so badly that we've got the highest marginal effective tax rate on business investment that you'll find anywhere in the developed world." I don't think that's a very good sales pitch. It's certainly not something to be proud of.

In Canada, we have an NDP government in Manitoba, a Conservative government in Alberta and a Liberal government in British Columbia, and all offer lower effective tax rates on investment. Roger Martin from the Rotman school of business is a man who folks across the way like to lean towards when in need of third party support, and this is what he said: "In Ontario, we still have one of the highest marginal tax burdens on business investment in the world."

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: In the world.

Ms. Laurie Scott: In the world.

Still, despite what is a clear message to make some important and much-needed changes, Ontario is governed by a political party that doesn't see the provincial tax structure as an important element and isn't sitting around the table saying, "We have to change our tax structure in Ontario to welcome more investment." Other provinces are getting it. We in Ontario are, unfortunately, not getting it.

That makes Bill 100 somewhat ill-designed and of little or no benefit to businesses because it's not creating that much of an incentive.

Just a couple of weeks ago, John Tory and the PC caucus hosted an economic round table to come up with ideas, and where did they go? They worked with the experts in business and industry on how to deal with today's financial and economic struggles. We did it. The Liberals across the way, they won't do it. They remain steadfast in thinking they know what's best. Out of the round table came a number of innovative thoughts, one

of them being that we need incentives for business; that includes tax incentives. It means getting out of this overweighing taxing of businesses that create jobs, move the economy and make Ontario competitive.

So we've got a bill before us here, Bill 100, introduced by the Minister of Finance, that says it's a 10-year corporate income tax holiday for commercialized intellectual property developed by research institutions to get technical. So let's see how another major third party group views this idea, not just us. The C.D. Howe Institute called it ill-designed. It said, "Tax holidays, also used in Quebec, are high-cost, low-impact policies, typically found in Third World countries and well proven to be ineffective." That is from the C.D. Howe Institute, not a really positive endorsement of this bill.

Jim Milway, executive director of the government-funded Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity, also criticized this government's decision to give a 10-year tax reduction to new businesses. He said that if the new technology becomes available, an existing business will have no particular incentive to develop it, even though an already successful firm might be able to do it faster and better than a start-up company could.

I make those comments to the members for Mississauga-Brampton South and Thunder Bay-Atikokan, who gave great examples in their ridings, but they're not going to qualify for this, which is what we're trying to tell the Liberal government. So you've got Jim Milway of the government-funded Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity—it's a government-funded institute, I want to say that again—saying that lowering overall taxes would be more effective and that it would do more for innovation.

This policy proposed by the Ministry of Finance is not allowing companies that are established to develop research and innovation, develop their companies—it's not doing anything for them. It doesn't allow support for a company that already exists to join ranks with a new company and provide support to get an innovative idea rolling. I wonder, in the criteria for successful applicants, if the number of jobs created has an influence? It certainly doesn't appear to have a basis for support, as I've mentioned, in other programs of the Ministry of Research and Innovation.

I know there are companies in my riding, existing companies—Armada Toolworks, for example, in Lindsay—that are trying to develop more innovation. They're looking to the government and saying, "What can you do to help us with research and innovation so that we don't have to move our jobs to Mexico? We want to stay here. We have a good workforce. We want to keep the jobs in Ontario," in this case, in Lindsay and the Kawartha Lakes area, but they're not going to qualify for this program. That's a tragedy. I continue to be concerned, as my caucus colleagues are over here. Why does the Liberal government feel the strong need to punish such businesses as Armada?

My motion last week to provide would-be apprentices with more job opportunities for employment, after their

schooling, by lowering the ratio of journeymen to apprentices, was defeated by the members across the way. This would have been a huge benefit to businesses that can't afford to hire the three journeymen and offer jobs for apprentices. Again, where is the Minister of Small Business, which is a common question we keep asking. Where is he? Why is he not stomping his feet and saying, "What about my stakeholders, Mr. Premier? Why are you not working to represent them?"

As a caucus, we certainly support incentives for business. We support measures that reduce the tax burden, increase investment for businesses already here in Ontario, as well as businesses that are looking to invest in Ontario. We can't support policies that are ill-designed and serve special interests. I believe that's a strong difference between our party on this side and the government party across the way.

What does Bill 100 do to help our struggling agriculture sector? I've got some very forward-thinking, progressive farmers in my area in Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, people like Lloyd Wicks, who are willing to move to innovative techniques and systems, thinking totally outside the box. What is our multi-cultural market for them in Toronto, in the big cities as well as globally? This guy has got awards across the world in the dairy cattle sector. He's not going to qualify for things in Bill 100. He's a pre-existing business.

1030

We've got our struggling auto sector who won't benefit from this bill. I have thousands of residents who are autoworkers in my area in Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. It used to be probably the largest private employer in my area. I think I probably have more of them who are retired now, unfortunately, than are employed actively in the automotive sector. The south part of my riding is very close to Oshawa. They're not benefiting from this bill. As a matter of fact, I'm looking forward to participating in the debate. My colleague from Oshawa is introducing a private member's bill this afternoon which focuses on the auto manufacturing sector in Ontario.

I want to make the point that Bill 100 is only available to new businesses in the following government-identified priority areas, so the eligible commercialization businesses, which are advanced health technology, bioeconomy, telecommunications, computer or digital technologies production. We asked the Minister of Research and Innovation, when he was in estimates, about this narrow margin. Again, this is from the Roger Martin testimony to the finance committee, pre-budget consultations, who said: "... the high-tech sectors broadly speaking, represent less than 2% of the jobs in Ontario and only a slightly higher proportion of the wages or GDP contribution.... It is more innovative because it values, supports and expects innovation across the other 98% of the economy as well as the high-tech sector, and we don't."

That is saying this is really only applying to 2% of the jobs in Ontario. He said we've got to define and support innovation broadly. It's critical to upgrading our com-

petitiveness, our innovation and policy, and Ontario can't characterize innovation so narrowly as it does. He's saying, support innovation across all sectors, not so narrowly focused. In Canada, innovations that made Masonite, Four Seasons, Couche-Tard, Gildan, Magna and McCain global leaders would not be counted as innovation.

Ontario needs to recognize all sorts of businesses and innovations across all sectors of the economy in order to be globally competitive. This 10-year Ontario income tax exemption for new corporations is too narrowly focused. We've talked before about what's wrong with—it was mentioned on the CBC—the gentleman that made the intermittent windshield wiper. I've mentioned some small businesses in my riding, some highly progressive thinkers, that are not going to qualify under Bill 100, and that's not fair. This is too narrowly focused. It's going to take years before you get any results.

Again, my colleague from Beaches-East York was correct in saying there's not enough venture capital out there—there is not. Access to capital for small firms and start-ups is increasingly difficult, we're finding. The Liberal government cancelled the labour-sponsored investment funds, and they provided no adequate replacement. We believe that there should be more fairness. There should be more possibilities of where this intellectual property comes from. We don't really have many details of how much this will cost the treasury, because I think the criteria are so narrowly focused. There's not going to be much room for many companies to apply.

I have to wrap up. My time is closing, and I'll look forward to closing comments and remarks from the opposition.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: Again I listened intently to what my colleague from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock had to say, and I think she hit most of the salient points: This bill will not help established companies, this bill will not help companies that seek to merge, and this bill will not help new start-up companies throughout the first 10 years of their existence, because most, if not all, of them pay little or no taxes in that period.

I listened to some of the jibes from my friends opposite while she was speaking, and the jibes are all about, "This is only one part of the plan," or "You're not talking about other initiatives that the government has taken."

Well, with respect, I think she talked about—and I defend her—the bill. If the government wants to talk about how good its other priorities are, I suggest they hold a news conference and talk about it. If the government members want to talk about how good this bill is, confine yourselves to what is contained within the body of the bill.

My friend from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock is correct in what she has had to state: that the bill will not do what many people are claiming is being done. The bill is narrowly confined; it has a budget of only \$5 million

this year and \$7 million next year. The bill itself, although welcomed, I'm sure, and I'm sure my colleague will be supporting it as well, needs extensive work if it is to be one piece of the puzzle that my friends opposite have talked about in numerous jibes.

I commend her for what she had to say, and she is correct in her analysis.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on the Ideas for the Future Act.

I must say that when this concept of a tax holiday on commercialization of intellectual property was announced in the 2008 budget, that was probably one of the most exciting pieces for me that I saw in that budget, among many other things. In my riding of Ottawa Centre I've had the opportunity to speak about that particular item with researchers at Carleton University, which is in my riding, with lawyers who practise in intellectual property law, and with other companies which make up Silicon Valley North, which is how Ottawa is sometimes referred to.

There's a great sense of optimism and excitement about this kind of approach which we are introducing through this particular act. We all realize that we live in an extremely globalized economy, where the competition now is not within our own borders; the competition is not within companies in Canada. The competition is global. The competition is with companies from India, China, Brazil and South Africa. These types of out-of-box ideas are the ones our companies are looking for to have that step ahead, to ensure that we can compete globally and that we can commercialize those technologies which we can sell across this world and get these great tax advantages.

I'm very excited that the McGuinty government is introducing this act and that we are providing a tax holiday for our new companies which will be commercializing intellectual property that will be created in Canada. I look forward to voting in favour of this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'd like to first reassure the member from Ottawa Centre that I respond to my colleague from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock from my own seat.

Congratulations on an excellent presentation, first of all. I think it's rather interesting that when we deal with this bill, what we're looking at, as in so many cases here, is the Liberal government wanting to bring in a bill on innovation—and I congratulate them for that—but, as I've previously said, with limited support.

The problem is, it needs to be fleshed out more. It's almost as if the party governing Ontario these days likes to stick its toe in the water and say, "You know, that feels pretty good." My attitude is, "Well, come on in. Let's all take a swim together."

I have a long memory. I remember the halcyon days of Nortel, and I remember Mitel and I remember Corel, and

certainly we all know the story of RIM. Some of that story continues and some of it doesn't.

In referring again to my friend from Ottawa Centre, he talks about Silicon Valley North. Indeed there is one, and there's another piece of it adjacent to my riding in Markham, where there's an awful lot of development. But most of this goes on as a result of private investment, of brave souls—and I've been one of those myself—who risk their own money, go out into the world and say, "I think I can do something." Ontarians have that ability. We have so many people and so many ideas. We have the labour force, and yet we turn on the news on a daily basis, and what have we been looking at for the past three days? A delegation from the province of Saskatchewan, the Premier of Saskatchewan, looking to take jobs from Ontario and move them somewhere else.

1040

We need a broader perspective, as my colleague from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock suggests. We need a broader perspective that doesn't simply give a 10-year tax exemption but injects money into the economy and makes energy and taxation more palatable for people who are prepared to invest their money, prepared to hire Ontario workers and prepared to go forward and say Ontario is and can remain number one.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? Response?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to have the members from Beaches-East York, Ottawa Centre and Thornhill, in his proper seat, comment on the 20 minutes that I spoke about Bill 100.

I'm hoping the folks across the way have finally begun hearing the ongoing cries from the business sector for tax reductions. Certainly the principle of this legislation is appreciated to that end. We know that Premier McGuinty smiles at every proposal to increase taxes and increase government revenue, but this is certainly a new direction for him. Obviously I don't think you'll be surprised upon hearing that I feel that this piece of legislation needs to be reviewed at committee.

I know some of my colleagues from across the way were saying it's just a piece of the puzzle, but how much longer do you have to wait? We need to get the puzzle together. Ontario is suffering. We're behind the rest of Canada. I don't want to assume anything, but certainly a government bill will be supported by enough Liberal members in order to get to committee. There certainly need to be some changes on some of the points that I mentioned.

My colleague the member from Niagara West-Glanbrook, who's the co-critic on this piece of legislation, and I are looking for the government to expand on its narrow focus, as I mentioned in detail in my comments. It's a narrow focus that exists in Bill 100. It needs to have more incentives for the private sector to have a much broader potential.

Our province certainly does need incentives. Our people need incentives to stay here. As my colleague from Thornhill already pointed out, Saskatchewan is here

poaching our great resources in Ontario of human potential and innovation, so we need to invest for people to stay here and to come to our province. It's our responsibility to encourage innovation that's open to the private sector as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Time for debate has ended.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Hon. Deborah Matthews: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to ask the House for unanimous consent for members to wear either the purple ribbon or the purple ribbon pin to mark October as national Child Abuse Prevention Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would like to introduce some guests of our pages who are here today:

On behalf of page Asha Collins, her mother, Anjani Collins; her father, Geoff; her sister Tara and her grandmother Kay Permomand are in the west members' gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

Page Lauren Chan's aunt Victoria will be joining us this afternoon in the members' gallery.

MEMBERS' DISCLOSURE STATEMENTS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I want to just take this opportunity to say I visited the Integrity Commissioner yesterday to sign my disclosure statement. I just want to remind members that disclosure statements were due yesterday, and if you have not completed your disclosure statement, the Integrity Commissioner would very much appreciate those being handed in as quickly as possible. Any staff members who are watching the proceedings, please remind your member and minister as well of the importance of doing so.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is for the Deputy Premier. It's in reference to the Saskatchewan Premier's presence at a Toronto job fair on Tuesday. In response to that, the Premier said that he would never discourage Ontarians from looking elsewhere in Canada for work. According to this week's report from Don Drummond of TD Bank, Ontario needs a bold new vision for its economy. But the Premier's response is, "Here's your hat; what's your hurry?" That's not a vision, that's a declaration of surrender. What's next? What can we

expect next, Deputy Premier? Changing Ontario's slogan to "Don't let the door hit you in the rear on the way out?"

Hon. George Smitherman: It's rather unfortunate that on a daily basis in this Legislature, the people of Ontario watching see of the opposition party here at Queen's Park a really sad sack attitude as it relates to the province of Ontario. It doesn't reflect well on the ambitions that Ontarians have for their selves, for their families and for our province overall. It doesn't reflect well on the facts either that unemployment rate in the province of Ontario is lower than when we took office, or that Ontario has created 60% of all the jobs in this country since January of this year. Yes, there are challenging times in the Ontario economy, and the people of Ontario know that we are a government that's willing to continue to work with them, to invest with them and in their communities, to build their strengths and the infrastructure that's necessary to sustain the economy. We'll continue to make these investments, reflecting the ambitions of the people of the province of Ontario, and not be drawn into the negativity of the opposition.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Premier McGuinty is the Joe Btfsplk of the Ontario Legislature, and I'll explain that later.

According to the latest Stats Canada figures, Ontario is still recording a net out-migration of residents, particularly to Alberta, soon to be replaced by Saskatchewan. No doubt, a contributing factor is your government's failure or unwillingness to recognize and acknowledge the failings of your economic policies and take action. Instead, three years ago it was just a little bit of contraction; this year the Premier says, "This too shall pass." Now he's telling Ontarians, "If you want to go out west to do business, to find a job, I'm not going to try to convince you to stay."

Minister, that's the attitude of someone who's not up to the job. You have the advice of a range of economic experts on what you can do to minimize the damage to our economy. When will you act on that advice?

Hon. George Smitherman: We see from the Leader of the Opposition a remount of the mantra that he used when he was part of the Harris government, but it does not reflect well on the ambitions that the people of the province of Ontario have.

Of course, in Saskatchewan, where there are some opportunities that relate to resources which are in very high demand, the Premier would recognize, as an individual from a family, that for individual reasons they may need to pursue some of the opportunities that are there. But this does not speak to the fundamental confidence that we have about the capacity of Ontario and Ontarians to build an economy together for the future. We are struggling through some challenges, particularly in some sectors, and that's why we're making timely and important investments in the strategies that can lead Ontario forward. We have struggled through challenging times before, and we will make progress in the circumstances by working together and making the investments

in Ontario's people, in Ontario's infrastructure, to be able to build the economy of the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: If the Deputy Premier wants to be honest with Ontarians, he'll admit that their five-point plan is a sham, a hollow shell and a failure. Their fallback is to blame others and to ignore measures that experts say could minimize the damage and protect our future; and to then send the Premier out to suggest that the answer for hundreds of thousands of Ontarians who have lost their jobs under his watch is that they might have better luck out west. It's a give-up attitude that Ontarians don't expect, or want, from their government or their Premier.

The record number of plant closings in this once-great province is draining the lifeblood out of our small towns. Minister, when is your government going to stop treating the great people and small towns of this province like some old dog you'd rather euthanize than try to keep alive?

1050

Hon. George Smitherman: I think the gentleman who bears the name "Mad Dog" has stretched just a little far as he reaches to drag Ontarians down—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask the member to—let's be conscious of personal attacks on one another. Deputy Premier.

Hon. George Smitherman: I note that one should never carry on with the level of language that was offered by the honourable member, which reflects his lack of spirit and his lack of recognition for the resiliency and the capacity of the people of Ontario to work together and find their way through difficult economic challenges. This is not the first time that we've faced that, and nobody should question the government's commitment nor the resiliency nor the mindset and spirit of the people of Ontario in this regard. Our five-point plan has seen us cut taxes, make huge investments in infrastructure, give support for innovation, partnering with business and investing in the skills of the people of the province of Ontario, in whom we have complete confidence.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I remind the government that it was their Premier who said that parts of Ontario's economy were not coming back, and here are some of the names on the tombstone—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Here are some of the names on the tombstone of your failed economic policies and fatalistic attitudes: London, St. Thomas, Kitchener, Guelph, Windsor and now Goderich. These were once-mighty manufacturing towns, and they were laid to waste under your solution of a one-way ticket to Saskatchewan.

You said that certain sectors were not coming back. Is this your eulogy for Ontario's economy?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: There is no doubt that too many families are struggling, too many communities have been hit by an international crisis in the manufacturing sector. I would remind the member that in spite of these challenges, employment growth is up 1.7%. There are 51,000 net new jobs this year. I remind the member that he voted against refunding the capital tax to manufacturers a year ago. Why did you do that? They needed cash and we got it into their hands.

I would ask the member opposite to say to the federal finance minister, "Don't talk Ontario down." It's unacceptable, and you shouldn't talk Ontario down. We are going to get through these challenging times, and we'll be stronger and better. What we don't need is that kind of nonsense from the Conservative Party. The challenge is here; it's real. We're addressing it—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Again, I would remind the Minister of Finance that it was his Premier, your Premier, the Premier of the province, who said that this province is finished, this province has parts of our economy which are not coming back: That's what your Premier said.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask the government members to tone it down a little bit.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The fact is that there are many actions this government could and should take to chart a new area for Ontario, particularly for southwestern Ontario. First and foremost, a change of attitude: Show people that you care, and give them a reason to stay in this province, to stay in Ontario. Don't get on the bus for Saskatchewan.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This government has made investments to attract manufacturers; you voted against it. We enhanced education funding to help retrain workers; you voted against it. We have invested \$9.9 billion in infrastructure. The cranes are up and down the highways. They are creating jobs, investment in this community; you voted against every single dollar.

We have talked up this province. We have acknowledged the challenge. We have acknowledged the issues. We have stood behind our families. You and your party, your Prime Minister, say that the fundamentals are there. They are in some sectors. You and your party have ignored Ontario.

The Premier of Ontario has stood strong and firm behind this province. It's the federal Conservatives that sell Ontario out, tell people not to invest here and say things like, "The glory days are over." They're not—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's absolutely amazing, this government; there's always someone else to blame for their problems. They're absolutely consistent that every problem that comes along is not of their making, it is of somebody else's making. As John Tory told the Ontario economic summit, the people of this province do not

accept the Premier's fatalistic attitude that Ontario is a helpless victim.

Don Drummond, this week in the TD Bank report, said, "Tax reductions need to feature" much "more prominently in the" Ontario "vision than they have in recent years." The Canadian Federation of Independent Business is telling you to reduce the apprenticeship regulations. Every family in Ontario is curbing spending. Why aren't you? Why are you acting like the coroner rather than the doctor? Why are you letting the economy die on the table?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: You know, the member, a question ago, said Ontario is laid to waste. We don't agree with you, sir. We completely disagree with you. The only thing laid to waste is the idea that tax cuts and deregulation are the answer to the challenges in our economy. And I would remind you, if you read Mr. Drummond's report, he advocates a nine-point approach which is almost identical, I would say, with respect, to our five-point plan: Invest in skills, lower business costs, invest in innovation, build partnerships, and Mr. Drummond identified, for the first time, that the figure is \$11.3 billion that goes out of Ontario to the rest of the country. If we had that money back, we could respond even more than we have. We need a federal partner. We need an opposition that will stand up for Ontario. Work with us, because the people of Ontario are going to get through this. Their government is going to see them through it—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

SKILLS TRAINING

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, in the March budget the government announced, with great fanfare, that the salvation of the Ontario economy would be a new second-career program. Seven months later, the minister admits that a grand total of 1,100 Ontarians have enrolled in the program. With less than 0.5% of recently laid-off Ontarians being served, when will the minister admit that the flagship program of your economic recovery plan has been a complete failure?

Hon. John Milloy: I want to thank the member for the question. I think members on all sides of the House are concerned when we hear about layoffs, but I know that the member would never want to leave the impression to this Legislature and to the public that second career represents the only opportunity for laid-off workers. In fact through the Employment Ontario network, our province deals with 900,000 people every year. Through the action centre, which is specifically set up to target laid-off workers, we've helped 53,000 people.

There are a variety of training programs which are available in this province. Over the summer months we've seen 3,000 people access training, 1,100 specifically for the long-term training which is offered by second career. Second career is a new program which offers long-term training, and when you look at those 1,100

stories, we're seeing a positive impact in the lives of Ontarians who have been laid off.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's nice to see the minister stand up and admit that only 1,100 unemployed workers are taking advantage of this program. It's not just the opposition that is sounding the alarm about Ontario's economic standing. Earlier referenced, Tuesday's Toronto Dominion report paints a grim picture of the future of Ontario's economy and a provincial government that has no idea of how to turn things around. Why won't the minister stand in his place and admit that the second-career program, along with the entire Liberal economic strategy, is a failure?

Hon. John Milloy: As I have pointed out, Employment Ontario deals with 900,000 clients every year. Action centres, which are specifically set up to deal with laid-off workers, dealt last year alone with 53,000 individuals. Over the summer months, the types of training opportunities that are offered in this province have seen 3,000 people come forward, 1,100 specifically for the type of long-term training under second career.

Let me give some examples. I met over the summer with Jason, laid off from the automotive manufacturing sector in the London area. He's begun a culinary management program at Fleming College and talked to me already about the job opportunities he has coming forward. Let me tell you about Jeff Statham, a 38-year-old father of two. He was laid off after working 18 years in the automotive industry, and after hearing about Second Career, has begun a program in law and security at Durham College. Let me tell you about Courtney, a 27-year-old single mother laid off from her—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

1100

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's very simple. When the numbers are against you, you go to anecdotes. The simple reality is that in manufacturing communities all over this province, the jobs aren't there to be trained for. When will the minister stop putting his head in the sand and admit that this flagship program is a failure?

Hon. John Milloy: As we've said since the beginning of this program, we're going to work with front-line workers to ensure that it is as effective as possible and make any changes that are needed. But how dare he stand up here and talk about individual stories and dismiss them as anecdotes? He's dismissing Courtney, a 27-year-old single mother laid off from her telemarketing job. Second Career is providing her support for tuition and instructional costs, books and living expenses to gain the skills she needs to become a recreation leader in a hospital or health care setting. That is her dream. That is not simply an anecdote.

Let me tell you about Robert, a 45-year-old who was laid off from his job as a general labourer at a small powder and painting company in London. He has been accepted to complete his training as a certified welder. I

am proud of that individual. That is not some anecdote to be dismissed by the opposition.

DENTAL CARE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: A question to the Minister of Health: The most prevalent chronic disease for Ontario children is tooth decay, and the reason for that is hundreds of thousands of low-income children live in families who can't afford basic dental care. A year ago, your government promised to spend \$135 million to improve access to dental care for low-income Ontarians. Today, low-income people, many with serious dental illnesses, are still waiting for the money. Not a single penny has flowed. When will the government finally live up to its promise and implement the new program?

Hon. David Caplan: I'm very proud of the fact that in our last budget, the finance minister provided the funding to be able to provide a dental plan for low-income Ontarians. In fact, we are working with our public health units around the province on the implementation of this plan.

Speaker, I would note, because you would be interested, and I'm sure all members of the House, that this member voted against that plan. He opposed this government moving ahead on a dental care program for low-income Ontarians. That's quite shocking. The member seeks to lead his party. I would suggest he take the opportunity to work with us in a constructive fashion to be able to help and support some of the most low-income and vulnerable Ontarians. I know Ontarians expect a lot of great work, and working, especially with my colleague, the Minister of Children and Youth Services, we are putting together a comprehensive—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's always interesting when you hear an empty answer. It's an indication that things are not happening. As you know, now is not the time to renege on a dental program. As the recession deepens, more and more people are in need of this kind of care.

Will you, Minister, assure Ontarians that the \$135 million committed for the dental program, including the \$45 million for this fiscal year, will flow on schedule?

Hon. David Caplan: Unfortunately, the member wrote his supplementary question without listening to the answer to the first question, when in fact I indicated quite clearly that the money was allocated in the budget. We are working with our public health units to design and implement a program that will meet the needs of low-income Ontarians, as we had spoken to them about this time last year during the election campaign. In fact, that work is well under way. It is work that has been the subject of the cabinet committee on poverty reduction, I note chaired very ably by my colleague, the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

This government certainly takes investments in health care, education and the economy at our highest priority, but work on climate change and poverty reduction is its

equal. I can tell you, Speaker, the kind of determination and the kind of collaboration which has been a hallmark of this government are going into the implementation of this plan. I'll offer to the member—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: That's the second time you had an opportunity to say that the money will flow this year, and you haven't made that commitment. You have not made that commitment. You continue to talk about talking with partners. You ignore the situation that people in Ontario are facing. Will you at least make the commitment that by January 1 of this coming year, money will flow and people will actually be getting the treatment they need? Will you make that commitment?

Hon. David Caplan: in fact, now the member's going to have to read Hansard to see that the answer was affirmative in both the answer and in the supplementary.

On March 18, 2008, the Premier announced the government will be developing a plan to provide dental service to low-income Ontarians and invest \$135 million over three years, starting in 2008-09. The press release at the time indicated, "The government will work with public health units, community health centres, dentists and dental hygienists to deliver prevention and treatment services for low-income Ontarians, especially children."

That's exactly as I have described. I'd be willing to work with the member opposite. It seems as though he has some preconceived notions, as he's indicated in his question and supplementary. But any Ontarian who would like to work with this government to alleviate the crushing poverty that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: My question is for the Minister of Government Services. This year, Oshawa celebrates the 100th anniversary of the McLaughlin Buick. It all started with a \$50,000 interest-free loan by the city of Oshawa to Sam McLaughlin to locate his business, now General Motors, in Oshawa. We've seen the benefits for over 100 years, whether it's the contributions to the health sector, education, scouting, youth development, let alone the jobs that it's created over that 100 years. It was through that outside-the-box thinking that Oshawa, Ontario and Canada have benefited because of Oshawa's vision.

Minister, we've seen some investment, but the jobs are still leaving in the thousands. What is your ministry doing to think outside the box to keep the auto and manufacturing sectors in Ontario?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Good question.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: It is a good question, and I want to begin by thanking the member for Oshawa for talking up Ontario, not talking down Ontario.

Our government's auto strategy is to create and protect jobs all across Ontario. Without it, the issues facing the

industry would have been much, much worse than we're seeing now. In fact, in Ontario today, we're the number one producer, thank goodness, of cars and auto parts in North America. That's something to be very proud of, and I know it's something the member opposite is proud of.

The government is telling automotive companies from around the world that Ontario is the best place to build automobiles and auto parts, and we're putting our money where our mouth is. We've brokered \$500 million of investment to create over \$8 billion of auto sector investment in this province, and we're proud of that.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: This afternoon, I have a bill that's a bit of an opening for outside-the-box thinking. It essentially formalizes the unwritten policy by the province for the procurement of government vehicles, but adds a new component where renting and leasing vehicles would also require that those individuals, paid for by the taxpayer, would then have to seek that same process. The hope is twofold: one, to expose those individuals to Made in Ontario, as well as hoping that the rental and leasing companies would expand their fleet of Made in Ontario products.

Should this bill pass today—and I'm getting some sense that there is some support from all sides—we have some concerns. We want to make sure that it comes before committee so that the auto sector and the manufacturing sector can come forward and present their ability to say how they see that outside-the-box thinking can aid their sectors and move Ontario to the forefront in those sectors once again.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Again to the member, I really do appreciate the thrust of your question. I think it's a helpful thrust. I want to say that our government has arrangements with major auto manufacturers in Ontario to supply approximately 1,500 new vehicles each year for the government's fleet. In April and May 2008 alone, the government purchased over 500 new vehicles from Ontario-based production facilities. For the 2008 model year, 71.5% of all vehicles purchased were manufactured right here in Ontario. This is up from roughly 66% the previous year. So we'll move ahead. I know all members of the House will want to give some serious reflective thought to the member opposite's private member's bill—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. The member from Nickel Belt.

1110

LABORATORY SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Since 1997, the hospitals in Huntsville and Bracebridge have been part of a pilot project of 12 community-based lab programs as an alternative to sending this work to private labs. Your ministry conducted the laboratory pilot project review. The review clearly shows that the pilot projects are a success and should be continued and expanded. In

light of that, how can the minister justify his decision to cut funding for the community-based program from Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare, sending nine laboratory technologists to the unemployment line?

Hon. David Caplan: It's unfortunate the member would make that kind of an allegation, which is simply not the case. These, in fact, are through the local health integration networks, decisions that are made to provide hospital services and health care services in the district that they serve. In fact, I can tell you that medical laboratories are quite important. I just had the occasion to be at the former Branson site, which is a sharing arrangement between three particular hospitals in Scarborough, North York and East York, a shared medical laboratory service which will serve literally hundreds of thousands of patients with test results.

I want to reiterate that it's unfortunate the member has characterized things in this way, because that is simply not the case.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Those services are being cut. The LHINs have nothing to do with it and this minister has everything to do with it. For nine years, the community-based lab program received no funding increase whatsoever, but the private lab received a 28% increase. Lab work done in the hospital costs \$22 to the taxpayer. When done in the private sector it's \$33 to the taxpayer. Hospitals in small communities need the critical mass of tests and qualified technologists to maintain best practices and offer 24/7 coverage. Physicians prefer to have the tests done in the hospital so the results are readily available. Boards, executives of hospitals, unions, patients, physicians and providers all agree that this minister's decision is indefensible. Will the minister agree to an immediate moratorium on the closing of the community-based labs pilot project?

Hon. David Caplan: The lab project was undertaken in 1997. In 2007, a review was undertaken by an independent outside consulting firm to assess the service delivery model and what was in the best interest of patients in the area. Upon the consultation and the review by the ministry, by the Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare hospital and by Gamma-Dynacare medical laboratories, they together determined that the best option to maintain local service was to accept the review's recommendation to adopt the same model of community laboratory services used right across Ontario.

That's why the ministry is working closely with the community lab provider, the Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare hospital in the North Simcoe Muskoka Local Health Integration Network, in the transition planning process to ensure that all residents of the pilot communities of Bracebridge, Huntsville—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is for the Minister of Government Services. We have heard a lot of criticism

about Ontario's public service from members of the Progressive Conservative Party and their leader, John Tory. The member from Leeds–Grenville has said that this government is bloating the bureaucracy. John Tory said that some of our public servants are simply “breathing each other's exhaust and sitting around, analyzing each other's papers.”

With criticism like that coming from our colleagues, it can be difficult to encourage some of my constituents from Ottawa Centre to gain employment with the Ontario public service. Since he is responsible for this issue, can the minister offer some positive encouragement for my constituents so we can continue to attract the best and brightest to the public service?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I want to thank the member opposite for his question and say today that I'm thrilled to share with the House that the Ontario public service has recently been selected as one of Canada's top 100 employers. This is a prestigious award that has been presented for the past eight years by Mediacorp Canada and recognizes those private and public sector organizations across the country that have the best-in-class employment services. More than 2,000 employers were considered.

I'm extremely proud to say this is the first time in the history of this nation that any public service anywhere in this country has been named to this list. This is an important award that puts us in a unique position to be an employer of choice, a great place—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I'm very pleased to hear that the Ontario public service is getting such great recognition for its employment practices. Every public servant should be very proud of this award.

But while I'm happy to hear that the Ontario public service is one of Canada's best employers, I still hear criticism from the opposition about its effectiveness. When speaking about some members of the public service, PC leader John Tory has said that “there hasn't been enough attention paid to looking at whether those people are really making a productive contribution to the effective delivery of public services.”

Minister, Ontario's public service may be one of the best employers, but does it in fact effectively deliver public services to Ontarians?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: It does. I'm pleased to say that the Ontario public service—

Interjections.

Hon. Ted McMeekin:—it may come as a surprise to some members opposite—is arguably the most efficient, professional and cost-effective public service, not just in Canada, but in the entire world.

Since 2003, the McGuinty government has committed to reinvesting in critical public services that were, in many cases, decimated by the party opposite. Many of these employees deliver key services to Ontarians. They make sure our food and water are healthy, that our streets are safer, that our natural environment is protected. They

prepare our students for success and they also work to reduce hospital wait times. We all rely on public servants for their advice, professionalism and expertise.

I'm proud of our Ontario public service. It is the best public service in the world and we should take time today to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. New question?

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a question for the Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services. Last Thursday, you voted against a private member's resolution to change the apprenticeship ratios in Ontario from three journeymen to one apprentice to, like most other provinces in Canada, one journeyman to one apprentice.

Can you explain why you want to limit opportunity for our young people to learn a trade and for our small businesses to develop skilled workers?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. John Milloy: Again, I appreciate the interest on all sides of the House in apprenticeships and the need for more skilled trades in our province.

I'm very proud of our government's record. Since we've taken office, there are 50,000 more apprentices learning a trade than when we came to office.

The member opposite, we've had a number of discussions about ratios. He's aware that ratios are set—we look to the industry for their best advice. I think he's also aware of the very thoughtful work that was done by Mr. Tim Armstrong, a noted labour expert. What Mr. Armstrong recommended was that there were a number of reforms that needed to be brought to the apprenticeship system, and he suggested that we put forward a college of trades, something we're undertaking right now, putting the groundwork together for potential legislation to come before this Legislature. This college of trades would strengthen our apprenticeship system. We'll look at a variety of issues, including ratios, and ensure that the success we've seen with apprenticeships and skilled trades in this province—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: My question was very specific to the Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services about why he didn't support small business and opportunity for our young people, so I don't know why he's passing the question off.

Minister of Small Business, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business points out that 98% of all businesses are small businesses and 43% of qualified labour shortages in Ontario are in jobs that require apprenticeship training or college education.

Why are you limiting opportunities for our young people by denying them the opportunity to apprentice by limiting available apprenticeship options and positions?

1120

Hon. John Milloy: Once again, I find it passing strange that the Progressive Conservatives talk about not making progress in terms of skilled trades. Maybe I should remind the member that when his government was in power, approximately 37,000 new apprenticeship registrations took place in their first three years. Let's look at our first three years: 60,000 new apprentices were registered in our first three years. Let's talk about that party's second mandate. They increased annual new apprenticeship registrations by just over 3,000 during their second mandate. Today we've doubled the number of annual new registrations to over 6,000 in just our first three years.

I'm proud of the progress we've made in increasing the number of apprenticeships in this province, and I'm proud of the work that's being done to by Kevin Whitaker and Tim Armstrong to further enhance and modernize the system so that we can meet the growing demand for skilled trades in this province.

CORONER'S OFFICE

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. The Goudge inquiry report came out quite clearly yesterday to say that the coroner's guidelines are not being followed when it comes to investigating deaths on reserves, and in fact it is the norm that the coroner actually doesn't go and do that investigation. My simple question is, how long have you known that this is the case?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to thank the member for the question. I also want to thank Commissioner Goudge for his very, very in-depth inquiry and his recommendations. Clearly, our ministry is already actively looking at ways to ensure that we can prevent what happened from ever happening again.

I want the member to know—and I answered this question yesterday at the press conference—that we understand that aboriginal and remote communities are faced with unique challenges, we appreciate the recommendations, and we will actively work at implementing a system in place so that there will be fairness in treatment in aboriginal and remote communities

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, clearly there is no fairness; there's no equal treatment when it comes to investigating deaths on reserves. Saying that in some cases the police should do it—as you know, it's not their job; it's the coroner's job. My question to you, and I want you to answer, is: When did you find out that this is the case? Did you just find out yesterday?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: As we move forward, we will ensure that we consult with our First Nations communities. We are very, very anxious to continue that involvement. We will ensure that there is full dialogue.

Interjections.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: There's no shame attached to how we're going to move forward. There is shame

attached to what we did previously. All parties were responsible. We are moving forward in a very positive, effective way to ensure that what we have in place in the future is much stronger than we had in place in the past.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Reza Moridi: My question is for the Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services. In my riding of Richmond Hill, and indeed across the province, the economy is facing a number of challenges. The economic slowdown in the United States, the high cost of oil and gas, loss of jobs here in Ontario, and increased competition from countries like China, India and Mexico are presenting challenges to our small and medium-sized businesses. I wonder if the minister would tell us just what this government is doing to ensure that Ontario businesses will continue to thrive amidst new challenges.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I want to thank the member from Richmond Hill for asking this question. He has already laid out some of the challenges that our small businesses are facing.

I had the chance to actually go and visit India and a couple of countries in the Middle East, and one of the things I found was that some of our companies, in spite of great products and services, were not being represented well in international markets or on a global scale. When I came back, I advocated that we should come up with an export development program that would encourage companies to showcase their products in the global market.

In last year's budget, we gave about \$5 million to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce for the export market access program, which will help our companies to showcase their products abroad.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Reza Moridi: I thank the minister, and also congratulate the chamber for the work they are doing.

From my experience, the global expansion program sounds like an initiative that my constituents would be interested in. It appears that there are many opportunities that I would like to tell my constituents about. Would the minister tell us exactly what types of activities are supported by the global expansion program, and what sort of help is available to businesses?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I think this is a great program. It's a 50-50 cost-sharing program with the companies in order for them to showcase their products and services abroad.

There are basically four areas covered. One is to enable them to make direct contacts abroad by going and visiting their companies or contacts abroad. The second is to help them to develop promotional material if they want to translate it into different languages, so that they can go and present those materials in the language of the country in which they want to do their business. The third is to do market research, if they want to do some market research of the company where they plan to do business. And the fourth one is to assist the companies to make foreign bids.

Those are the four areas this program concentrates on. I think this will help our small companies to showcase their products and services, and to visit the countries they want to do business in. We really want to focus on the markets that they have not developed before.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. In the last few days, families of preschool children in Innisfil and Barrie were told that Simcoe Community Services has to close the Early Years centre in Stroud. They also have to shut down the toy lending van, both because you have refused to increase their funding since 2003. Minister, why are you forcing this centre to close?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question. Let me first say that we are, as a government, committed to the development of kids. We have invested tremendous amounts of money and effort into making sure that kids have the best opportunities possible.

Early Years centres were established several years ago, under the previous government, as you will recall, with one per riding. We have continued to fund Early Years centres. But we've also continued to build other supports for kids in the communities. As we go forward, we're committing to increasing the numbers of parent and family literacy centres located in schools, to make sure that kids get the very best start possible in life.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Minister, over the last year, 857 children and babies visited this centre, along with their parents and caregivers. These include people such as Jamie Grant and her 3-year-old daughter, Ella, from Barrie, who came to the centre in Stroud because the one in Barrie is full; and parents such as Nicole Goodfellow and 10-month-old Brady.

Minister, what message do you have for these families, who will lose their centre at the end of November?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This government's commitment to kids in this province is something that I think is undeniable. But we lost a very important partner and that was the federal government. As you will recall, the Stephen Harper government cancelled the Early Years agreement. That took \$1.1 billion out of child care in this province—\$1.1 billion out of child care.

So our commitment continues. We are very much looking forward to the report from Dr. Charles Pascal on the early years. As you know, he is working and consulting across the province on this issue.

In this particular case, I do want to say that the regional office is looking for other opportunities for that particular OEYC.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant LHIN did not hold public consulta-

tions—as was reported yesterday by the acting minister—on the McMaster ER closure. Two city councillors invited the private corporation, Hamilton Health Sciences, to make presentations at two meetings in their wards: Dundas and West Mountain, not Hamilton West. The LHIN, the decision-maker on this, did not hold any public consultations on this issue. There is no evidence that any feedback from these presentations went to the LHIN. I, the sitting member, was not invited. The member for Hamilton Centre was not invited.

As the LHIN did not hold any public consultations but the minister says that it was a decision “we made,” then the minister can direct the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant LHIN to go back to the drawing board and engage the public in open, accessible consultations in all of the communities directly affected by this proposed—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister.

1130

Hon. David Caplan: I'm advised that the hospital began consultations back a year ago. I'm surprised that this member wouldn't have taken up the opportunity of McMaster and Hamilton Health Sciences to be able to do that. In fact, the local health integration network directed Hamilton Health Sciences to continue to consult with the community, as they've done. They've also put in place an internal monitoring group to monitor the implementation of the plan that Hamilton Health Sciences put forward.

This member would be or should be aware that the city of Hamilton has stated that it is their goal that Hamilton be the best place in the world to raise a child. I know that health care plays a very important part in that. That's why I know that Hamilton Health Sciences and the local LHIN are very much engaging local community medical staff and others who are very—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: That makes sense: Close a hospital; we'll get good service. Again, a verbal dance with no substance. The professionals in Hamilton who will be affected by the closure have not been heard—the paramedics who will need to drive a greater distance to take their patients to an emergency room in the centre of Hamilton, the doctors who have spoken out against this move and the people in my riding who have to go further for emergency care. My riding's only emergency room, serving a significant part of the Hamilton community, is open from 8 in the morning until 12 at night.

Will this minister intervene to reverse the ill-advised decision, suspend the activities of the LHIN and direct the program audit of this dysfunctional, out-of-touch organization that they appointed?

Hon. David Caplan: I think we should strip out the rhetoric that we just heard. First of all, a hospital is not being closed in Hamilton. In fact, services are being provided—

Interjection

Hon. David Caplan: Well, I'm afraid, sir, that you're all rhetoric and no substance whatsoever, related to any

of the question that you asked. I've been assured that there have been a number of open houses and meetings with health care professionals, unions and a variety of others completed as a part of the process aimed at improving the overall care being offered to residents of Hamilton. In fact, Dr. Salim Yusuf, professor of medicine at McMaster University, vice-president of research at McMaster, says, "Although the general public may be afraid of losing an ER in their neighbourhood, they'll ultimately benefit from the move.... In the end, it's the health of the people of Hamilton that matters."

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment that he just made—

Mr. Paul Miller: Grudgingly withdrawn.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No. Withdraw the comment.

Mr. Paul Miller: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: My question is for the Minister of Education.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I now proceed with my question to the Minister of Education. Minister, I had the privilege recently of touring a high school in the great riding of Etobicoke North and, of course, I had the opportunity of speaking with students who shared with me their excitement about the specialist high skills major program. I understand that we now have approximately 14,000 students participating in 14 majors in almost 500 programs in 340 secondary schools. Some of my constituents, however, are concerned that such programs are making school, as they say, easier, by taking the focus away from traditional academic subjects and the credits earned. Minister, I ask you to address these concerns of the residents of Etobicoke North and Ontarians broadly.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The specialist high skills majors are really a very innovative part of our student success strategy. They allow students to bundle together academic and technological credits that allow them, when they graduate from high school, to enter the workforce or enter a college or university program that is very specific. Whether it's in construction, in arts, in culinary arts, in manufacturing or in IT, they have an opportunity to go into further training having had experience in the workplace and in their schools.

These programs are designed to help our kids be smarter, not to make school easier. We believe that if we can capture kids who maybe are disengaged from school and get them interested because of one of these very specific programs, they'll stay in school, they'll graduate and they'll be a functioning part of our economy.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Constituents of mine view a high school graduation diploma as central to a successful and

productive life. Our research tells us that the unemployment rate for non-graduates trying to enter the workforce is 33% and they earn on average 70% less over their working lives.

When we came to office in 2003, a full third of our secondary students were failing to graduate from high school. Clearly, that speaks volumes about the previous government's legacy in education—a legacy of antagonism, cuts and withdrawal of student supports.

Things, of course, are improving. We now have 10,500 more students graduating every year, and it appears even the opposition is recognizing this. As the member for Simcoe North said in 2007, "One of the things I want to put on the record ... is the number of very positive things that are happening in our schools and some of the neat things that are happening in ... schools I've visited," and he's appreciative of that.

Minister, would you enlighten this chamber about what other initiatives we are undertaking to support student success?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I visit schools around the province—and obviously the members opposite are having the same experience—there are some wonderful things happening that are new and innovative. They have been developed by teachers in the schools with the help of the ministry, and that's why they're working, because people on the front lines knew that they were what kids needed, and we have been able to support them.

So, things like our increased co-op: We heard from the sector that kids needed more co-op credits, and we have allowed that to happen; they've flourished. Dual credits: This morning, I was at the Ontario economic summit, and the members of industry and the post-secondary institutions who were sitting with me raised, unsolicited, the idea and the fact that the dual credit system is helping kids who might not think about post-secondary at all to have an opportunity to think about what it would be like to go to college, because they're getting a high school credit and a college credit at the same time.

The student success strategy is working. More kids are graduating—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. New question.

C. DIFFICILE

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for the minister responsible for seniors. As the minister knows, her government has made it impossible to get accurate reporting on the number of deaths we've had as a result of C. difficile. We know the figure is around 500 and we know it tends to affect mostly people with depleted immune systems, mostly seniors. I had surgery myself in a Toronto hospital recently and my surgeon told me that he wasn't worried about me because I was a fit 60-year-old man, not a 90-year-old frail senior.

With their inaction, the McGuinty government's cavalier attitude is telling Ontarians that they are willing to accept the 500-plus senior casualties. Minister, are seniors of so little value? Is your government's cavalier

attitude on C. difficile a form of age discrimination against our seniors, the very people who built the province?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: I'll refer that question to my colleague the Minister of Health.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. David Caplan: The premise of the member's question is quite incorrect. An independent officer of this Legislature, the Auditor General, found—and you'd only have to look at his recent report—that the ministry has introduced several encouraging initiatives to help prevent and control infectious diseases in hospitals. He goes on to point out information on a number of types of hospital-acquired infections and a number of steps that this government has taken: starting in 2004, under the leadership of my colleague, the establishment of the Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee, getting expert advice on what we could possibly do, all of the particular measures that would need to be in place to be able to protect Ontarians. This government has shown the leadership necessary by taking that expert advice and turning it into action.

The Just Clean Your Hands campaign is another example. The provincial infectious disease control network—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

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Mr. Peter Shurman: I can't believe that I got the answer I did from the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I was asking the question of the minister responsible for seniors because this is not a question about C. difficile; it's about a possible age discrimination issue.

I can't really believe that any government would stand idly by, like the McGuinty government is doing right now. I have a hard time believing that they are truly concerned about the health and well-being of the people of this province. In fact, I believe that if this terrible disease affected a younger demographic, the McGuinty government would be jumping through hoops to find out how to stop the spread of the infection—and rightly so. But all we get now is this daily stonewalling, excuses and platitudes.

Minister, tell us and tell Ontarians the truth: Is this a form of age discrimination, or are you simply not moved by the painful deaths of hundreds of Ontario seniors?

Hon. David Caplan: Unfortunately, the premise of the member's question is not only insulting to the hard-working nurses, doctors, hospital administrators and many, many others who are working in a concerted and collaborative way to contain hospital-acquired infection, but in fact to the experts we have engaged—Dr. Michael Baker, Dr. Michael Gardam and many others—to be able to protect Ontarians. This member and his party cavalierly throw these things out—unfortunately, ill-informed as they are—about the actions which have taken place.

Ontario rates compare, so far, quite favourably with other jurisdictions that are measured around the world. Ontario, in fact, is the second province in Canada to begin publicly reporting. We are, as I said, taking that

professional advice; we're turning it into action. We are ensuring that we have support for our front-line medical—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. New question.

BREASTFEEDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Earlier this week, the Premier told us that public health units are taking care of breastfeeding in this province and that everything is fine and dandy. Well, it isn't. Ontario is one of only two provinces without a breastfeeding strategy. In Ontario, only 20% of moms breastfeed exclusively after six months. The target is 50%. Will the minister admit that the low rate of breastfeeding in Ontario is a serious health risk?

Hon. David Caplan: I want you to know that this government, myself and all members of the government, believe that breastfeeding, prenatal and early childhood experience—we understand that they have a profound effect on health and well-being, particularly later in life. That is why the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Health Promotion support public health's reproductive and child health mandatory programs.

A number of things and a number of initiatives that are ongoing that I know the member would want to be aware of: information lines—24-hour advice lines that mothers can call; 48-hour follow-ups by nurses to new mothers; group parenting sessions on a range of topics, including breastfeeding; breastfeeding support during home visits through the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program; and working within the community to develop supportive environments for breastfeeding. That is a comprehensive plan, and that is comprehensive work that we are undertaking, in turn with partners in public health units and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I agree that the health units do good work on breastfeeding, but they lack the funds and staff expertise to fully support new mothers with breastfeeding. Furthermore, the critical stage of breastfeeding initiation is when a woman is still in the hospital, but many hospital nurses have no training in lactation management. This forces women to find support elsewhere. Often, they just give up, to the detriment of their baby.

Will the minister develop a breastfeeding strategy based on the World Health Organization's baby-friendly initiative that would ensure that hospitals adequately train staff to help every mother breastfeeding succeed?

Hon. David Caplan: The facts of the matter are that it was this government, through the work of my predecessor and several colleagues in finance, who uploaded a number of the public health programs and funding from municipalities to the provincial government. In fact, 75 cents of every dollar that is spent in public health is provided through the provincial treasury—after, in fact, they began the downloading, the New Democrats, of public health onto municipalities. I think the member

would do well to acknowledge what the history and what the context is.

Additional dollars are being put into these kinds of programs, into breastfeeding, because we do understand the importance that getting off to a good start in life plays in prenatal and in maternal and early childhood experiences. We require public health units to provide breastfeeding programs and to be able to provide the funding to do so. The Ministry of Health Promotion's child health program—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. New question?

ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: My question is for the Minister of Culture. Building healthy, vibrant communities is important both for the residents of my riding of Brampton—Springdale and people across Ontario. It's important that we build strong communities so that Ontarians can lead active lives and can enjoy the best quality of life possible. Ontario can achieve this by investing in the arts and culture, the environment, sports and recreation and social services.

Can the Minister of Culture explain to this House what programs are available to assist our communities in delivering positive initiatives for the residents of my riding and the people of Ontario?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: I thank my colleague for her excellent question. The McGuinty government recognizes that we need to invest in our communities if we want to foster a healthy Ontario with a high quality of life. That's why the Ontario Trillium Foundation, an agency of my ministry, shares knowledge, provides advice and makes over 1,000 grants to communities across our fair province. These Ontario Trillium Foundation grants help not-for-profit groups, charitable groups, to build and strengthen their respective organizations in each and every one of our communities. It's because of these grants that over 200,000 volunteers last year contributed more than six million volunteer hours, which is quite a record, to build our healthy, vibrant communities.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just want to take this opportunity—it's always nice to have somebody's mom in the House. On behalf of the Minister of Tourism, Monique Smith, we'd like to welcome Marthe Smith here to Queen's Park today. Welcome.

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: "Whereas the current Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital is fully utilized; and

"Whereas Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital was sized to serve a town of Oakville population of 130,000, and the current population is now well over 170,000; and

"Whereas the population of Oakville continues to grow as mandated by 'Places to Grow,' an act of the Ontario Legislature, and is projected to be 187,500 in 2012, the completion date for a new facility in the original time frame; and

"Whereas residents of the town of Oakville are entitled to the same quality of health care as all Ontarians; and

"Whereas hospital facilities in the surrounding area do not have capacity to absorb Oakville's overflow needs;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure take the necessary steps to ensure the new Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital be completed under its original timelines without further delay."

I add my name to the petition, and I pass it to Timothy.

BABY'S BEST START

Mr. Paul Miller: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislature reinstate the program Baby's Best Start, which provides prenatal postnatal information, advice, nutrition and health."

I hereby sign my name to this, and I agree with this petition.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas crack houses, brothels and other persistent problem properties undermine a neighbourhood by generating public disorder, fear and insecurity; and

"Whereas current solutions—enforcement measures based on current criminal, civil and bylaws—are slow, expensive, cumbersome and not always successful; and

"Whereas safer communities and neighbourhoods (SCAN) legislation is provincial, civil law which counters the negative impact on neighbourhoods of entrenched drug, prostitution or illegal liquor sales based out of homes and businesses and is being successfully utilized in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and the Yukon...;

"Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, urge the province of Ontario to enact safer communities and neighbourhood (SCAN) legislation in Ontario for the benefit of our neighbourhoods and communities."

I agree with this petition and send it to the table by way of page Connor.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the people of the province of Ontario deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and their grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents; and

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"Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant's willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act as above to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and their grandparents."

BABY'S BEST START

Mr. Paul Miller: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Baby's Best Start program provides prenatal and postnatal information, advice, nutrition and health; and

"Whereas this program gives each and every one of us moms the knowledge that helps us with our infants; and

"Whereas the knowledge helps our babies, it also helps us in caring for them;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario reinstate the program Baby's Best Start in Hamilton."

I hereby affix my name to this. I agree with this petition, and Michael will take this.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Etobicoke North.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Speaker. I have a petition here addressed to the Ontario Legislative

Assembly regarding western Mississauga ambulatory surgery centre. It reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I agree, affix my signature and send it to you by way of page Imaan.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Milton District Hospital was designed to serve a population of 30,000 and the town of Milton is now home to more than 69,000 people and is still growing rapidly; and

"Whereas the town of Milton is the fastest-growing town in Canada and was forced into that rate of growth by an act of the Ontario Legislature called 'Places to Grow'; and

"Whereas the town of Milton is projected to have a population of 101,600 people in 2014, which is the earliest date an expansion of the hospital could be completed; and

"Whereas the current Milton facility is too small to accommodate Milton's explosive growth and parts of the hospital prohibit the integration of new outpatient clinics and diagnostic technologies;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure take the necessary steps to ensure timely approval and construction of the expansion to Milton District Hospital."

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this petition and pass it to Timothy.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I would like to add my voice to those who have been petitioning the Legislature for the

ambulatory surgery centre in western Mississauga. The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I'm pleased to add my signature to this petition and to support it, and I ask page Connor to carry it for me.

SEXUAL REASSIGNMENT SURGERY

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition. This one comes from the Embassy on Taunton Road. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the previous Progressive Conservative government determined sex change operations were not a medical spending priority and instead chose to invest in essential health care services; and

"Whereas Premier McGuinty said in 2004 that funding for sex change operations was not a priority of his government; and

"Whereas the current Liberal government has eliminated and reduced OHIP coverage for chiropractic, optometry and physiotherapy services; and

"Whereas the present shortage of doctors and nurses, troubling waiting times for emergency services and other treatment, operational challenges at many hospitals, as well as a crisis in our long-term-care homes signify the current government has not met their health care commitments;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario does not fund sex change operations under OHIP and instead concentrates its priorities on essential health services and directs our health care resources to improve patient care for Ontarians."

I affix my name in full support.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas crack houses, brothels and other persistent problem properties undermine a neighbourhood by generating public disorder, fear and insecurity; and

"Whereas current solutions—enforcement measures based on current criminal, civil and bylaws—are slow, expensive, cumbersome and not always successful; and

"Whereas safer communities and neighbourhoods (SCAN) legislation is provincial, civil law which counters the negative impact on neighbourhoods of entrenched drug, prostitution or illegal liquor sales based out of homes and businesses and is being successfully utilized in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and the Yukon ...

"Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, residents of Lowertown, Ottawa, urge the province of Ontario to enact safer communities and neighbourhoods (SCAN) legislation in Ontario for the benefit of our neighbourhoods and communities."

I agree with the petition, endorse it and send it by way of page Imaan to the table.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Mario Sergio: I have received another petition with respect to firearms in vehicles, which I'd like to read to the House, and it pertains to Bill 56.

"Whereas innocent people are being victimized by the growing number of unlawful firearms in our communities; and

"Whereas police officers, military personnel and lawfully licensed persons are the only people allowed to possess firearms; and

"Whereas a growing number of unlawful firearms are transported, smuggled and found in motor vehicles; and

"Whereas impounding motor vehicles and suspending driver's licences of persons possessing unlawful firearms in motor vehicles would aid the police in their efforts to make our streets safer;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 56, entitled the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act, 2008, into law, so that we can reduce the number of crimes involving firearms in our communities."

I do concur with the petitioners and I will affix my signature to it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There appearing to be no further petitions to be presented, this House stands adjourned until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1158 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Peter Shurman: Not a day goes by that my office is not approached by a parent seeking help for a child afflicted with autism. Autism destroys marriages,

tears families apart, overburdens sometimes elderly parents and often puts the safety and health of all family members at risk.

Sadly, all too often the only thing we can say to the families that turn to us for help is, "Wait in line." Time is a luxury too many cannot afford. Waiting in line is simply not an option.

I know that many members of this House feel compassion, but also a sense of helplessness and frustration, as they hear stories of impossible situations that families affected by autism must overcome.

Today, I am here to tell you that our compassion and empathy, while noble, are simply not enough. Someone once said, "Concern should drive us into action, not into depression." "Wait in line" just doesn't cut it.

We, the members of this House, are elected to cure the ills that afflict our society, not aggravate them. Today, I call on all my colleagues from all parties to rise to that challenge and prove to our constituents that the confidence they placed in us as they cast their ballots on October 10, 2007, was not misplaced. Let's put our best thinking caps on and come up with real solutions that will lift the burden Ontario families dealing with autism can simply no longer bear.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mr. Paul Miller: Yesterday and today, I asked a question of the Acting Premier and the minister about the dysfunctional Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant LHIN. The answer that was given was deflection, and stone-walled the issue. The Acting Premier said that clinical leaders were consulted. Perhaps some selected senior clinical leaders were consulted, but they did not represent the view of the majority of clinical leaders, health care workers and the public in the Hamilton health science catchment area. Also, the MPPs who live in and represent this area were not consulted.

I encourage the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to take a stand for the people of greater Hamilton and rein in this out-of-control LHIN board. When one of the board's own members, Stephen Birch, felt compelled to resign because, and I quote, "the public was not given a voice," it speaks volumes about how this board does not understand its community responsibility but acts as though it is directed by the private corporation, Hamilton Health Sciences. The real issue is that with this change, Hamilton Health Sciences reduces its cost at the expense of the public.

The minister must initiate some good faith for the people of greater Hamilton. I'm calling on him to rescind the appointments of the current LHIN board and open the appointment process to all residents of the community within this LHIN, not just those in professional categories.

The mandate for the LHIN must also be rewritten to enshrine the duty to perform full public community consultations on all proposed changes to the delivery of

health care. Perhaps we can then have some confidence that the views, concerns and wishes of our communities will be heard and represented.

AJAX FIRE STATION

Mr. Joe Dickson: On Tuesday of this week in my riding of Ajax-Pickering, the municipality opened the first new green, LEEDS-certified fire station in Ontario. I had the pleasure of introducing Ontario's Minister of the Environment, John Gerretsen, who officially opened the new, \$12-million station in concert with Ajax Mayor Parish, Ajax council and Ajax Fire Chief Randy Wilson. Minister Gerretsen also brought greetings from our Premier, Dalton McGuinty, on this environmental breakthrough.

I, as a member of Ajax council, prior to being elected MPP, had the pleasure of speaking on and voting in favour of the new fire hall and having it proceed with the LEEDS roof and many other environmental improvements.

This new complex will save some 112 tonnes of greenhouse gases per year, equivalent to taking 23 cars off the road each year and eliminating 1,150 cars over the building's lifespan. It is also equivalent to protecting 100 acres of forestry per year and nearly 5,000 acres of forestry during the building's lifetime. The new Ajax fire station will also realize natural gas savings of 66.2%. In comparison to the old fire station, the new Ajax fire station is 55% larger and will use 58% less energy at 58% of the cost.

Well done, Ajax Fire and Emergency Services. Thank you.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: This week 500 workers at the Volvo road grading plant learned they were losing their jobs. This is just the latest layoff in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

Not long ago it was the CanGro plant in Exeter that was announcing their closure. When that closure was announced, my colleague from Niagara West-Glanbrook and I wrote to the Premier and asked him to do anything he could to try to save the plant and the many jobs, both in the factory and the agriculture industry. We couldn't convince the Minister of Agriculture and the Premier to take any action. I might have thought that the member from Huron-Bruce would have been able to convince her party to do something, but she too appears to have failed.

Now it's the Volvo road grading plant in her riding. This plant was known for producing some of the top road graders. Ten years ago, Volvo thought it was good enough to invest in, and now, in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, this plant is closing.

Yesterday, my colleague the member from Halton came into the Legislature and questioned the Minister of Finance on what the government had done to try to keep this company here. In this Legislature, the member from

Huron-Bruce always has lots to say when the opposition is speaking, but she hasn't questioned the government about what they are doing, and going to do, to save these jobs.

Hopefully, before we have any more plant closures, the members on the other side of the House will speak up, and hopefully, the Premier will listen to them and save the jobs for these Ontarians.

SKILLS TRAINING

Mr. Phil McNeely: It is with great pleasure that I rise today to share with this House and all Ontarians the McGuinty government's commitments to helping displaced workers and communities get back on their feet.

The cornerstone of this commitment is second career, an innovative program to assist those workers who have been laid off. Second career will help individuals get the new skills necessary to compete and succeed in the new economy.

In June, the McGuinty government launched second career, which will provide \$355 million to help 20,000 laid-off workers train for long-term, high-skilled occupations that are in demand in their communities.

This investment also partners each of these participants with an Employment Ontario counsellor who can provide one-on-one, individualized counselling to establish a return-to-work action plan that reflects the needs, experience and education of each participant.

The McGuinty government's commitment to workers and their families is also seen in the \$500-million advanced manufacturing fund, which has maintained and created 4,000 jobs since it was implemented.

These new job growth strategies are just a couple of examples of this government's commitment to workers throughout this province. We understand the challenges of the new economy and will continue to work with Ontarians to succeed in it.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr. Toby Barrett: Is the environment minister going to ride the rails as the Flick Off express train leaves the station this month? Before climbing aboard the train, he should be reminded that the Flick Off campaign cost his predecessor her job last year.

Media report the Premier has no problem with this campaign—a campaign that uses phrases like “Go flick yourself,” “Are we flicked?” and “Flick Fest,” which this government proudly describes as edgy and progressive.

Question: Will people once again become incensed by the suggestiveness of these slogans? If so, will the present minister also find himself derailed?

How much money is this government shovelling into the Flick Off train? The minister says in this House that much of what he does is for children. Flick Off insults young people and is offensive to those very children.

Is this play on foul language the only way to get children's attention? Are there not better ways to highlight

climate change? And I'm not referring to a cap-and-trade deal with Utah. Some feel that makes about as much sense as cap-and-trade with Arizona—something that actually has been done.

Is the minister packing his bags to “rock the rails with the Flick Off express”? My advice: Stay at the station. Forget the gimmicks. Put your efforts into developing real public policy on these very serious issues.

FIRST NATIONS REVENUE SHARING

Mrs. Van Bommel: I rise today in the House to share with my colleagues and all Ontarians the great strides this government is taking in terms of improving the quality of life for Ontario's First Nations communities.

On February 7 of this year, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and First Nations chiefs from across Ontario announced the ratification of a historic agreement worth over \$3 billion.

The agreement, which is based on an agreement-in-principle signed by the province and First Nations in 2006, draws on provincial gaming revenues and provides the long-term revenues that First Nations can use to improve their quality of life and to help strengthen their communities. This also builds on the McGuinty government's new approach to aboriginal affairs, which emphasizes a co-operative relationship between the Ontario government and First Nations and is focused on shared goals for long-term positive change. As Ontario Regional Chief Angus Toulouse said, “Ultimately, this is a success story for both the province and First Nations communities.”

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This has certainly been welcome news for the First Nations communities in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. I strongly encourage my colleagues and all Ontarians to learn more about this announcement, as well as the overall approach this government has chosen as we work with our First Nations, Inuit and Metis people.

EMPLOYMENT ONTARIO

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I rise today to praise the work of the organizations located in the riding of York South-Weston which are helping Ontarians get the training, education, skills and experience needed to achieve their goals. These include Jane Alliance Neighbourhood Services, MicroSkills, COSTI and the Learning Enrichment Foundation.

During these uncertain economic times we are experiencing, another vehicle which residents are finding to be very useful is Employment Ontario. Its services can be accessed online by phone or in person in one of their offices located across the province, making it easy for everyone to find information on services in their community and get the assistance that they need.

Employment Ontario alone provides almost \$1 billion in integrated training, apprenticeship and labour market services, bringing together approximately 1,200 service

providers in all regions of the province. Employment Ontario offers in-depth information to employers, employees, apprentices and job seekers. For example, if you are an employer, you can access information about tax credits, training boards and labour market information. This type of information can be critical when a business is just starting up or has a desire to expand and to grow. If you are an employee, you can find information about literacy and basic skills programs, training, and even how to start your own business.

I would encourage all Ontarians to use the Employment Ontario network to help achieve their goals and strengthen our province.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Mike Colle: For too long the hard-working people in communities across Ontario have been gouged by the federal government's equalization program, which takes over \$23 billion out of the pockets of hard-working Ontarians and sends it to the equalization program in Ottawa.

Recently, even the TD Bank came to the defence of these hard-working Ontarians and joined the call for Ontario citizens to receive their fair share of the federal government's equalization program and the money it takes out of taxes from the people of Ontario. Drummond said that Ontario is owed at least \$11.8 billion—that's owed to the people of Ontario. The people of Ontario, frankly, are sick and tired of paying all this GST, personal income tax, business tax and corporate taxes. They work hard, and where does the money go? It goes to Ottawa's equalization program and goes to have lower property taxes in other provinces, more programs in other provinces. Yet the people of Ontario are the ones doing the work, paying the taxes and trying to make a living.

Prime Minister Harper and Jim Flaherty don't stand up for fair treatment of Ontario taxpayers. All they want to do is to keep some of their own money in their pockets in St. Thomas, in Welland, in St. Catharines. Why should we have to ship it to Chatham, New Brunswick? Let's keep it in Chatham, Ontario. That's what I ask for.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I beg leave to present a report on the review of the standing orders from the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly and move adoption of the recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Balkissoon presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations. Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Just to report to the House that the committee met several times during the summer. Although there might not have been total agreement on some of the changes being recommended, I think the members of the opposition party and the third party have submitted their own opposing opinions. In the end, the committee voted on some recommendations. The report is before you, and I move adjournment.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Balkissoon moves the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SAFER COMMUNITIES AND NEIGHBOURHOODS ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ ACCRUE DES COLLECTIVITÉS ET DES QUARTIERS

Mr. Naqvi moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 106, An Act to provide for safer communities and neighbourhoods / *Projet de loi 106, Loi visant à accroître la sécurité des collectivités et des quartiers.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: The purpose of the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act—SCAN in short—is to enhance community safety by targeting properties that are used for illegal activities.

The bill, if passed, provides a mechanism to deal with properties that are habitually used for specified illegal activities and adversely affect—that is, negatively impact on the health, safety or security of—a community or neighbourhood.

This bill fosters a partnership between municipalities, neighbours, tenants, police and community associations to make our neighbourhoods safe.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the member as well for shortening the explanatory note that was actually part of the bill—much appreciated by all members.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Hon. Deborah Matthews: October is Women's History Month. It's a time to honour women of courage, of conviction and of commitment.

This special month was first designated in 1992 by the Canadian government. Since then, it has given us an opportunity to acknowledge all the women of Ontario who have changed our lives for the better in every aspect of life and in every community across this province.

This October, we celebrate women in the lead. They are strong women who have created and continue to create strong communities, and they are courageous women who have shaped and continue to shape our history.

Over the years, women in Ontario have championed justice, broken down barriers and created opportunities. They have left their footprint in every walk of life, from science, medicine, the arts and business to public administration, education, sports and politics.

There are so many from the past to celebrate; for instance:

—Mary Ann Shadd, an anti-slave freedom fighter who moved to the Windsor area and became the first female newspaper editor in Canada, establishing the *Provincial Freeman*.

—Elsie Gregory MacGill, one of Canada's leading aeronautical engineers and the first woman to receive an electrical engineering degree in Canada.

—Dorothea Mitchell, the "lady lumberjack" who was the first single woman to be granted homestead rights in Canada in 1910 and went on to become Canada's first female independent filmmaker.

These are just some of the "first" women of Ontario, women who have helped open up the doors of freedom, justice and opportunity for all the others who have come after them.

We have other modern-day "first" women in virtually every field, women who believed there was no frontier too far and no limit to commitment and conviction, women like:

—Dr. Roberta Bondar, Canada's first female astronaut.

—Lynda Powless, an entrepreneur who is the first native woman to own and operate the only native weekly newspaper in Canada, *Turtle Island News*.

—June Callwood, whose name is synonymous with social justice, social activism and caring in this province, who founded Canada's first AIDS hospice, Casey House.

There are so many others. Some are well-known names. Others may be lesser known but are equally inspiring.

Through the latest round of our own Leading Women/Girls, Building Communities Awards, members of this Legislature nominated 70 women and girls who are taking the lead in their communities.

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This October, the words of the first female mayor of a major Canadian city come to mind. Charlotte Whitton was the first female mayor of Ottawa, a feminist and a staunch advocate for children. "Action," she said, "makes more fortune than caution." The courage and accomplishments of so many Ontario women are testament to the truth of her words. Because so many dared to dream, dared to challenge and dared to act, Ontario is second to none in the world.

During this month, I urge each of you to visit the Ontario Women's Directorate website at www.ontariowomensdirectoriate.gov.on.ca to learn more about Ontario's first women. I'd like to thank them for all they have done and for all they have given to each of us, our families, our communities and our province. I'm privileged to work with the many women and men of Ontario who are following in their footsteps to advance opportunity, justice and dignity for the women of Ontario and the world.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Statements by ministries? Responses?

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: On behalf of our leader, John Tory, and the Progressive Conservative caucus, we are certainly very pleased to take this opportunity to recognize the very significant women who have taken a leading role in the history, not just of our communities and our province, but of our country. Hopefully, this will be an opportunity for people throughout Canada to take a look at women who have made contributions to Canada and recognize that women have indeed played a very, very important role in the history of our country.

We want to acknowledge women, whether they're in science, whether they're in politics, whether they're in the arts, whether they're in business, public administration, education, whatever field it may be. We know that there are leading women who have certainly provided a role model for others to follow and we congratulate and we thank these women.

This year, we are focusing on the theme of leadership, leading women. The women who have gone before us have opened the door for all of those who follow. I just want to focus on a few people who I believe have made a difference; there are so many, many more.

Last night, I was at the 20th anniversary celebration of Focus for Ethnic Women in my community. This is a group of women who, 20 years ago, decided that they were going to help and support the immigrant and visible minority women who came to Canada and make sure that they had an opportunity to become familiar with the Canadian way of life, to learn the English language, to build on the skills they brought to this country, to become women who could provide for themselves and for their family and to proudly take their place in Canadian society. I want to congratulate the people at Focus for Ethnic Women. They've had a tremendous impact on

many, many women in my community. It was quite heartwarming last night to hear the personal stories that they told about the impact that Focus for Ethnic Women had on their lives. They had helped them to break down the barriers, they had helped them to gain the self-confidence and the language skills that they needed, and they had certainly helped them to ensure that they had opportunities for providing that better life.

One person whom, for whatever reason, I remember, when I was first considering becoming a politician, was a lady by the name of Ellen Fairclough. She actually signed a certificate that I have at one time. She was the very first female member of a Canadian cabinet. In 1957, she was appointed by John Diefenbaker to the position of Secretary of State of Canada, and then in 1958 she became the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. As I said, when I became a Canadian citizen, she actually signed my certificate. Sometimes you wonder, "Who is this person?" She actually was the first female acting Prime Minister of Canada as well, in 1958. She was granted the rare honour of having the Right Honourable bestowed upon on her in 1992 by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. So she was a significant role model for all of us who choose to follow the political path.

Another individual that I think provided outstanding leadership was Dr. Sheela Basrur. You just can't say enough about Sheela. We all remember that voice of reason during the SARS crisis, how she was able to restore calm during a very troubling time, and give reassurance to a very nervous population. She had a long history of accomplishments in the field of public health. She was inducted into the Order of Ontario and she has received so much recognition. Certainly, she is a woman who made a difference not only in the public's eyes, but I know that she was an outstanding role model for her daughter as well and for the community.

These are just a few of the women. As I say, there are women everywhere who are making a positive difference, and we congratulate them.

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

M^{me} France G  linas: It is my pleasure to rise today to recognize Women's History Month. The history pages are dominated by men—actually, very much like this Legislative Assembly, and assemblies in every other province in Canada. However, in October, we are given the opportunity to look at women's impact on history.

Since the creation of Women's History Month in 1992, we've celebrated the opportunity for Canadians to learn about the many and significant contributions of girls and women in our society. This year's theme is "Women in the Lead." It looks at women in Canada that have opened doors for women worldwide. It gives us a chance to recognize women's contributions, from the Famous Five, who worked tirelessly to get Canadian women to vote—in French we call them "les suffragettes"—to astronaut Roberta Bondar. This month allows us a chance to recognize the achievement of diverse women as a vital part of our Canadian history. But it is

crucial to use this month to learn from our past mistakes in representing women's interests. We need to look at the future and how we can make a difference to improve the lives of women in Ontario.

This month encourages all Canadians to take the lead and recognize the efforts of great Canadian women. Every day, we should celebrate the great Ontario women who are marginalized by inadequate policies, but who continue to work hard to better their lives for themselves, their families and their community. I'm thinking of women that have to re-mortgage their homes to pay for IBI therapy for their children that are autistic, because there are no policies that support those children and allow them to receive the care they need. All we have are long waiting lists. Those women are champions.

On September 17, which happens to be 71% into the year, we celebrate Now You're Working for Free Day. That's because women work for 71% of a man's wage. This is a campaign that has been launched by our labour friends to try to reduce this income disparity between men and women, because for work of equal value, women get paid 71 cents on the dollar. Although the Pay Equity Act has been in place for 20 years, the gap is still there. The resulting 29% gender pay gap means that women are effectively denied their fair pay from September 17 to December 31, each and every year.

In 2005, women in Ontario counted for two thirds of the people working for minimum wage in Ontario. When the NDP advocates for \$10.25 an hour now, we're advocating for women so that they have a chance to live above the poverty line. Mothers working multiple jobs on minimum wage to create a better life for their children, women in aboriginal communities taking the lead to improve their communities, disabled women challenging stereotypes and seeking gainful employment every day—in our books, all these women are leaders.

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We need more court certification so that those two thirds of people working on minimum wage can get organized so we can start to get them better wages, better benefits, better jobs. That would help women, but it is not being supported by this government. Women have lost their jobs, either in the forestry or manufacturing industry, because this government has turned their backs and let them down. They haven't supported them, and these women are now either running out of employment insurance or going on Ontario Works altogether.

I want to talk about women's health issues. They are at the bottom of the list. I have been advocating for breastfeeding support, an Ontario-wide strategy. I get told, "Things are fine and dandy." Ontario doesn't have a breastfeeding strategy. We are at the bottom of the pack. Every other province but one has a breastfeeding strategy, but not Ontario. Why is women's health at the bottom of the pack?

We must take the lead and make strides to open more doors for women by helping them out of the poverty cycle, improving their opportunities for work outside of minimum wage, and improving ODSP for women on disability.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS**

**SIGNAGE TO PROMOTE ONTARIO
GROWN AGRICULTURAL FOOD
PRODUCTS ACT, 2008**

**LOI DE 2008 SUR L’AFFICHAGE
VISANT À PROMOUVOIR
LES PRODUITS AGROALIMENTAIRES
CULTIVÉS EN ONTARIO**

Mr. Hardeman moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 98, An Act to promote the sale of Ontario grown agricultural food products by amending the Municipal Act, 2001 and the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act/ Projet de loi 98, Loi visant à promouvoir la vente de produits agroalimentaires cultivés en Ontario en modifiant la Loi de 2001 sur les municipalités et la Loi sur l'aménagement des voies publiques et des transports en commun.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Hardeman has moved second reading of Bill 98. Pursuant to standing order 97, Mr. Hardeman, you have up to 12 minutes.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: This bill is about supporting our hard-working farmers, helping Ontarians find local food and strengthening our rural economy. Everyone knows that the best food in the world is grown by farmers right here in Ontario, and it's even better when you can get it straight from the farm. Every summer people across Ontario look forward to buying freshly grown products from farmers at produce stands and local farms. Consumers watch for the signs advertising fresh strawberries, corn, apples, tomatoes and other products, then follow these signs to the farm.

For farmers, on-farm sales are an important source of additional income, and they depend on signage to alert consumers to when produce is being harvested and generate a significant amount of those sales. Many farms are located on country side roads with very little traffic, so farmers need the ability to place these signs on well-travelled highways where they can reach more people. However, current legislation prohibits signs within 400 metres of a highway unless they display the name of the premises, the name of the owner of the premises, or that a ministerial permit has been granted. If a farmer applied for a ministerial permit when the strawberries were ready, the harvest would be over before he got his sign up.

This bill creates an exemption that would allow farmers to post seasonal, directional signs on land adjacent to highways. The sign must be on privately owned, agriculturally zoned land and can only advertise food that was grown by the owner of the sign. It is a simple change, but one that is needed to support our farmers and allow them to maintain and increase farm sales.

I am very pleased at the support that this bill has received from farmers, agriculture organizations and hopefully, this afternoon, from this Legislature.

Brenda Lammens, chair of the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association, is here today in the gallery and I want to thank her for her support. She said, "The ability to erect a directional sign on privately owned agricultural zoned land makes sense for farmers and consumers. The intent is simple: to link consumers with fresh, locally produced food that might otherwise be hard to find on our country side roads."

One of the challenges for farmers is that the prohibition on signs has been enforced inconsistently across the province. The Renfrew County National Farmers Union said, "In Renfrew county local farmers experienced problems trying to advertise their product at the gate."

In Norfolk, several farmers were forced to take down their signs. One of these was Charles Emre, an asparagus farmer, who estimated that when he removed his sign, his sales dropped 50%. After a lot of media attention, the Ministry of Transportation quickly agreed to allow the fresh asparagus signs for the rest of this harvest season.

Across Ontario, farmers don't know when, or if, they will be forced to take their signs down. Given that the time period when the fresh produce is available can be so short, farmers can't afford this uncertainty. Charles told me that after all the trouble he had with the signs, he considered getting out of the asparagus business until a local worker asked what would happen to her job if he did. Every spring, Charles hires local people to pick, package and sell asparagus. These are jobs that would disappear if farmers like Charles aren't allowed to post signage and bring consumers to the farm. I want to thank Charles for his work on this issue and his contribution to this bill.

At a time when Ontario is facing economic challenges and every day we hear about more job losses, shouldn't the government be doing whatever it can to preserve and create jobs, especially in rural communities and in the agriculture industry?

More and more people are recognizing the importance of local food. They recognize not only the great taste and freshness of Ontario-grown food, but also that by buying locally they are supporting our farmers. Every week there are media articles talking about the 100-mile diet and the great food we grow in Ontario.

The Muskoka medical officer of health, Dr. Charles Gardner, recently wrote a column encouraging people to buy locally. He pointed out that "heat- and light-sensitive vitamins like A and C tend to break down when foods are transported or stored for any length of time." His recommendation is: "Buy direct. Take your family on an outing to local farms that sell fresh produce and ask farmers about their products and farming practices."

I want to commend those Ontarians who are trying to eat more locally grown food. But how are people supposed to find the farms and know when produce is harvested unless farmers can put up signs to promote their food products?

As the demand for locally grown food continues to increase, there are great opportunities for our farmers. We need to ensure that red tape doesn't stop them from meeting that demand. We need to do more to connect farmers with the people who want to buy their produce. It's not good enough to sing about how great Ontario-grown food is or spend money on slick advertising campaigns. We need to take real action to help our farmers to ensure that our agriculture industry can not only survive but grow.

When I talk to farmers about what we need to compete internationally, one of the concerns I often hear is that we have too much red tape—rules that are inconsistent or serve no purpose. That's what red tape is. This bill is a small but concrete step toward addressing one of these problems. In fact, the Canadian Farm Animal Care Trust said, "I am surprised the Ontario government hasn't recognized the importance and necessity for what the bill will do to help our farmers survive in these difficult days."

Many farmers in Ontario are struggling to make ends meet and hold on to their farms, such as the young farmers who were missed by many of our government's programs. Tender fruit farmers are worried about markets for their produce now that CanGro has closed.

I recently received a letter in support of the bill, which said in part, "The Niagara Peninsula Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association acknowledges the difficulties facing growers who wish to promote on-farm sales and the problems caused by inconsistent enforcement and overregulation by government. Growers need to be freed from red tape and be allowed to market their crops in ways that are profitable."

When farmers are struggling, they look to the government, not for overzealous enforcement of red tape but for fair, reasonable solutions. They want the government to work with them. For some farmers, giving them the ability to increase on-farm sales may be the difference between keeping and losing the farm, or it might be enough to hire one more person.

This coming Monday marks the beginning of the 10th annual Ontario Agriculture Week. I would like to point out that Agriculture Week was created by another Progressive Conservative private member's bill in this Legislature 10 years ago. It makes this a particularly good time for us all to work together to support Ontario's farmers. We can demonstrate that support by giving this bill second reading and immediately holding committee hearings to keep this bill moving forward.

These are a number of quotes we have from people who have been writing in supporting this bill since we announced that we were introducing it. Grant Robertson, of the National Farmers Union, said: "We would encourage all members of the Legislature to vote for passage of private member's Bill 98. For these members who are willing to stand with you and Ontario's farmers, it is a small step to say we recognize the important contributions farm families make to our economic well-being and the health of Ontarians."

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Kevin Schooley of the Ontario Berry Growers Association said, "Our industry has a great tradition of on-farm sales, and this bill would help ensure the tradition continues. The OBGA would like to support your pursuit"—and this is written to me—"of this bill and wish you success in obtaining this valuable bill for all produce growers who rely on on-farm sales."

Dave Mackay of the Renfrew County National Farmers Union says, "We in the NFU hope that Mr. Hardeman's bill around highway signage manages to get past partisanship and passes at the legislative level."

Allan Burn of the Ontario Sheep Marketing Agency says, "As an industry that relies on farm gate freezer trade, we the board support your bill and its intentions to make it easier for our 3,900 producers to use farm advertising signage."

And Charles Emre, whom I mentioned earlier, an asparagus grower from Norfolk, said, "I was very pleased to hear Mr. Hardeman was introducing a private member's bill addressing the issue of signage to promote agriculture. I believe this is a positive step to support agriculture, Ontario farmers and the economy, as well as making fresh produce more available to all Ontarians."

Anne Howden Thompson of the Ontario Farmer said, "The unique challenge for farmers seeking seasonal sales is that many aren't located on the well-travelled provincial highways, and so both farmers and consumers have come to rely on directional signs that will help people find when crops are being harvested and where they are available."

I hope the members on both sides of the House will support this bill so that we can help our farmers and Ontarians to let them once again follow the signs to discover the great locally grown food straight from the farm. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to introduce this private member's bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm going to share my time with the honourable member from Welland. I'm going to take a couple of minutes on this.

I'd like to commend the member from Oxford on Bill 98. This bill is long overdue. It's a good bill. As NDPers, when it comes to what's good for the people in Ontario, we're non-partisan. Honourable member from Oxford, we would like to tell you that we will be supporting your bill. We find that the farmers of this province have been almost overtaken with goods from other sources, from South America. For example, in the Niagara region, recently we had farmers destroy thousands of peach trees through frustration because the last canning factory in the Niagara region—one of the last canning factories in Canada—had to go under. That was debated to a great extent in this House. It was a shame.

When we see these products coming in from other countries, we have concerns about the content, for example, the recent situation with milk in China, other products have been filled with lead, things that are

coming into our province that have been dangerous. I personally feel much better getting food from Joe Smith up in the country above Hamilton than I would taking my chances on some of the food products that come from other countries, not knowing where they came from, who grew them, what content and are they safe to eat.

Our farmers grow quality goods. We have great milk. We have great food in this province. It should be dealt with. Nothing irritates me more than to see things go to waste. When I see peach trees being destroyed and other goods—tomatoes piling up in piles rotting because they don't have a market for them—it's really disheartening. It's time we started to buy Ontario. It's time we gave our farmers the ability to advertise on their own farms down their lane. Farmers struggle at the best of times, especially when there are bad crops when they have a real problem getting by that year. Subsidies don't cut it. If these farmers stop farming because they can't sell their products, this province is going to be in dire straits. I am more than pleased, as an NDP member of this House, to support this bill, and I wish the member all the best.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Leal: It is a real pleasure for me to be in the House this afternoon to indeed enthusiastically support Bill 98, which has been presented by my good friend and colleague the former agriculture minister of the province of Ontario, Mr. Hardeman.

It's interesting; we have really taken this initiative—I see my friend the member from Victoria-Haliburton-Brock is here today. Between our ridings, we launched a number of years ago the Kawartha Choice branding, which was an opportunity for farmers in Victoria-Haliburton-Brock and Peterborough to come together with their respective chambers of commerce to initiate Kawartha Choice branding. So when the good citizens of Victoria-Haliburton-Brock and Peterborough ridings tour the back lanes in our ridings and see that Kawartha Choice symbol, they can go into those farms and purchase everything they want in terms of fresh produce.

Each Saturday morning, I always feel that it's a great sounding board to go to the Peterborough farmers' market. There are about 200 vendors there supplying a wide range of very fresh goods. I want to have a paid advertisement today. My good friend Joyce Millar and her husband have an egg operation in the municipality of Otonabee-South Monaghan, which is in my riding, and I'm a faithful purchaser of eggs from Joyce. I visit and chat with her each and every Saturday morning, and she really appreciates the opportunities for the local folks to—

Interjections.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I'm getting some heckling from my own party here today—visit and chat with her and to understand the challenges that are faced by the farm community today.

I'd also like to get on the record Ms. Erma Van Beek, who is the president of the Peterborough County Federation of Agriculture, who does a great job and meets

with me and her colleagues periodically to share with me the challenges they're facing.

I know the member for Oxford would be interested in this newest development here in Peterborough. Just to the north of the city of Peterborough, we now have the McLean Berry Farm. They've been involved in the last number year in growing and distributing the ever-bearing strawberry. These are strawberries that are grown in late August, September and October, so you go to the Peterborough farmers' market and continually get fresh strawberries. It's a favourite of my son Braden. Braden and his buddies like to make smoothies. He's 10 years old. They get the fresh strawberries, add a little bit of vanilla ice cream and 1% milk, and churn it all up. That's the favourite snack of my kids.

What's important about that is that they take that recipe to their colleagues at school. He's in grade 5 at St. Anne's school in Peterborough, and that's one of the favourite snacks for the kids there. But what does that do? It allows our kids to (a) have an appreciation when it's grown locally, (b) support our dairy farmers by consuming both milk and ice cream. These are the kinds of positive things I know my good friend the member for Oxford wants to promote through this bill. This really is an opportunity for all of us to come together—the government, the official opposition, the third party and the independent party—in unison to support something that we feel will have a very positive impact for farmers not only in Oxford but in Peterborough and right across this province.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure you've received a call from your wife from time to time, unexpected friends drop over for dinner, so if you see a farmer's market stand, you can just go in there and grab some corn and fresh beans and other things to assist—and I know you do—with that family dinner.

On behalf of the citizens in the riding of Peterborough, we wholeheartedly, 1,000%, support the private member's bill from my good friend from Oxford to make this a reality.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Excellent, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. I'm pleased to offer my full support and take a few minutes to comment on the legislation brought forward by my colleague the member for Oxford; he's also our critic for the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

The member for Oxford has been up to my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock several times in the last year and a half to have round table discussions with local producers. The last day he even came up to the Lindsay agricultural fairgrounds, our new fairgrounds, the second fair that they've had there, and had a great tour. They celebrated a wonderful fair just a couple of weeks ago. So he knows my local farmers and producers, and they certainly respect his ability and knowledge in the industry.

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This Bill 98, An Act to promote the sale of Ontario grown agricultural food products by amending the Municipal Act, 2001 and the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act—when my colleague from Oxford first introduced the bill in June, I was actually shocked that this province, which has such a reliance on and supposed fondness for our farmers, had an unfriendly policy such as what currently exists that removes the signs directing consumers to buy local produce. In fact, the member from Oxford got a great headline: “MPP Ernie Hardeman Wants You to See the Signs.” That was the headline in the National Farmers Union-Ontario. They did a great write-up on the introduction of this bill.

So, good things do grow in Ontario, and we have to tell more people and direct more people to buy them.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Sing it; come on.

Ms. Laurie Scott: We could sing it, but I’m telling you, I don’t think you want me to sing it.

Why we are allowing regulations such as this—doesn’t seem to have any real substance. We’re allowing policies that force red tape and cut off some of the lifelines for our hard-working farmers and agricultural professionals.

So when the bill was introduced, of course we immediately jumped on the bandwagon, supportive of our farmers, the directional signs that we have. I know that the member from Peterborough mentioned Kawartha Choice that was developed through the chambers of commerce and farm communities in both our ridings. They have those labels not only on their end-of-farm gates, on the sides of the roads, but there are also bumper stickers that they can get and signs in the stores that educate people about and build awareness of locally grown produce. Certainly, that has been of great benefit.

The Farmers Feed Cities! campaign—my nieces were wearing those T-shirts in the local Bobcaygeon fair parade this past weekend—was also initiated by some of the great folks in my riding.

Last winter, we had a meeting with the local chambers of commerce in my community and some of the community improvement groups as a way of dealing with the high Canadian dollar of that time. We got together to say, “Okay, we’re suffering here. These are challenging economic times. What can we do?” From that meeting, the Lindsay Chamber of Commerce came out with a marketing and promotion program, fittingly called Shop Locally. It’s a great example of the local support of the merchants and farmers. I know that Gayle Jones, the manager of the Lindsay and District Chamber of Commerce, has been credited with further advancing the Shop Locally campaign. They also provide marketing tools, which is the signage, and the goal of this signage is to clearly identify local products for consumers.

As in my riding, as mentioned by my colleagues, most rural areas and most farms are off the beaten path of the highways. People need to have the signs to direct them off those trails. In my younger days of crop cruising—maybe now it’s a different form of crop cruising—they’d

actually go and find end-of-farm-gate produce to be bought.

Laughter.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I know, some of the members are getting that.

The legislation does provide some help for our farmers.

I must credit the member from Oxford for picking up this flaw that we have in our policies, making the changes that go forward, and supporting our agriculture industry.

Thank you for this time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate.

Mr. Peter Kormos: This bill, sponsored by the member for Oxford, Mr. Hardeman, is smart, timely, effective and would be implemented at no cost whatsoever to the taxpayer.

Down where I come from in Welland—you’re familiar with the riding—there are parts of Welland, just like there are a few other parts in the province of Ontario, where, based on newspaper reports of police activity, it seems the largest cash crop is marijuana. I’m not sure that Mr. Hardeman had that in mind, and I’m not sure that those folks necessarily want signage. My fear, though, is that because of the ongoing assault on agriculture in this province, the only cash crop that may be left in the course of the next decade could be marijuana.

My cousin Jozef Kormos is visiting here from Slovakia. He’s from Haniska-Presov. He was born in the family village, a small village, called Bajerovce, in the mountains. He’s been proud to show me Slovakia, a very agricultural nation. He’s been proud to show me and feed me—and look at me, I’ve been well-fed; it’s been a long time since I’ve been hungry—the produce that Slovak farmers grow. But I drive him down to Welland on the weekends, and I tell you, my cousin Joe is amazed as we pass the vineyards—huge, huge vineyards—as we pass the peach and cherry orchards, as we stop off down on Regional Road 24, the Vineland cut-off, with the fruit retailers there, and buy fresh apricots and fresh blueberries and, of course, peaches. He missed the cherry season. I apologize to him for that. I’ll try to have him back next year or the year after.

But I’ve got great fear because this law—and I hope it passes; we’ll be supporting it—may be moot, academic, if there’s no agricultural produce left in this province. I say that to say that is not being in any way, shape or form melodramatic. Our farmers are at risk. This bill, of course, considers not just fruit and vegetable producers, but producers of livestock—pig, cattle, emu, ostrich, buffalo—eggs, and the processed foods, the honeys and cheeses. Let’s face it, we can’t count on the large super-market chains to accommodate Ontario produce. They can’t; they won’t. They’ve shown time and time again that they will pay but lip service to Buy Ontario. We need the farmers’ markets, and I say that if we’re going to talk about this bill, we’ve got to talk about making sure that farmers’ markets not only survive—because

they're at risk, with a regulatory regime that encumbers them in a way that's totally unfair and totally unnecessary, I say to you.

Reflect just back a year: Superior Sausage down on Roncesvalles—the best kielbasa in Toronto. These people weren't just producing high-quality sausage, they were maintaining a culinary culture, something I feel very strongly about. Whether it's the Amish and the food products they make, the Poles, the Ukrainians, the Italians, or the new Canadians from Somalia, the Caribbean or South America, they're a very important part of our Canadian culture, our culinary culture. The more we relinquish to the large meatpacking industry, the more we forfeit the culinary culture of Canada. Superior Sausage: a family-run business, high-quality produce. There was never a single incident of listeria flowing from that shop.

I go down to Ujfalusy, the Hungarian, down in Port Colborne, and here's old man Ujfalusy having to convert his whole small shop from—you know the wood doors on the freezers with the big, metal handle? We grew up with those, for Pete's sake, down where I come from. Well, it's got to be stainless steel now. All the wood trim in his shop has to be converted to non-wood or finished in such a way that there's no risk. I tell you, folks bought Ujfalusy's hurka and other sausages for decades and generations. They export it and send it to their families across Canada and America. Here's a producer who's at risk of being put out of business because the standards for big meat processors—and let's face it, those standards haven't worked particularly well, have they?—are being imposed on small, boutique processors, like Ujfalusy's butcher shop. I tell you, Ujfalusy down on the east side of Port Colborne—if you want hurka, you go to Ujfalusy, or you can go to the Welland market on Saturdays; his family's there selling it.

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We've got to become far more aggressive. I have great respect for the Speaker of this Assembly, because the Speaker has been very aggressive in promoting Ontario produce in any way that he can. But I say that this Parliament building should be a showcase for Ontario produce. I quite frankly am not interested in a single juice product or processed product being sold in the cafeteria here or anywhere in the hallways that doesn't reflect the Ontario agriculture industry. That's a step that hasn't yet been taken.

I don't know where you come from—I do know where you come from, Speaker; you're from one of the southernmost parts of Ontario, just like I am. I'm not quite as far south as you are; we don't grow orange trees where I come from. We need a market for our apples and apple juices—grape juices. Sadly, with the closure of CanGro—this government let the CanGro opportunity slip through its fingers—there aren't going to be many processed juices. We're going to have to rely on the small boutique producers.

The grape industry: David Wiley, one of Niagara's outstanding grape growers, gave me a call just the other week—I wrote a letter to the Minister of Agriculture.

David Wiley and his family have 170 acres of grapes down in the St. Catharines area. He has only had a market for one quarter of that crop. David Wiley estimates that around 5,000 tons of grapes, worth up to \$6 million, are going to rot this year. It's a simple matter of this government making sure that the wine content legislation ensures that if it's called an Ontario wine, it darned well better have 100% Ontario grapes.

You see, there are things that can be done right now—right now—to save an industry that's very much at risk, and thousands of jobs. Don't think for a minute that agriculture doesn't create jobs. It's not just the jobs on the farm; it's all the suppliers, the industries that support the agricultural industry.

I support this bill enthusiastically. I want it to go to committee, because I think committee hearings, which should be speedy but full as well, should consider this and all those things the government not only can but ought to do. It's government's responsibility to protect this unique asset that we in Ontario have, this legacy that this generation of political leadership is not just squandering but abandoning and quite frankly, by its own hand, destroying. We'd better stand up for agriculture, the farmers who grow the food and produce the stuff we eat, who have served us for generations and deserve far better than they are getting now.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: Certainly, as an MPP from a very agricultural riding and farmer myself, I'm very pleased to stand in support of this private member's bill presented by the member for Oxford.

I know myself, as I drive through my own riding, that I have three counties I represent, and each of the counties has opportunities for the farm gate sales that this would address. Certainly I enjoy, to a great extent, just going through different parts—I know the Speaker probably enjoys stopping for tomatoes on his way home. In the Chatham-Kent area, I get an opportunity to stop and get tomatoes. I can get virtually any vegetable that's produced in the Grand Bend area. I have the same opportunity to stop and get potatoes, carrots, cabbage and lettuce. I can do the same thing again in the Arkona and Forest area, where I can pick up every possible fruit imaginable. We get cherries, peaches and apples there.

I really look for the signs that the member is addressing here, and I often find that one of the things that can happen is that I am going by a farm gate, the stand is there, the sign is right there in front of the stand and I can't make a safe stop to get there. When I'm reading the bill, it says "provides directions," and that the signs should be on land that's owned or rented by the owner of the sign. I would, maybe, suggest that somehow we could also, with permission of a landowner, do the same thing. Like I said, in order to be able to get there, I need the time to be able to stop safely. That's just one of those things.

I also want to, just before I go any further, welcome Brenda. Are you wearing your lovely asparagus pin

today? Brenda has this wonderful asparagus pin. It's not just a piece of jewellery. She promotes her product when she wears it, and I have the same embarrassment today too because I'm not wearing my chicken pin either. I'm not wearing the chicken pin, so I guess today we are both kind of guilty of that.

Again, like I said, the signs are an important part of what's happening at the farm gate. What I find over time is that these signs have become very sophisticated, and they're actually rather attractive pieces of artwork in some cases. You will see a cob of sweet corn, and it's beautifully done, beautifully painted, or a big red tomato with the directions on where to find the farm inside the tomato. People continue to do a beautiful job of promoting their product by making the signs look attractive as well.

I know the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock was talking about crop touring. That is not something that farmers do by themselves anymore. This has become something else. As she alluded to, it probably has a little different intent than it does when we do it. Still, people do have an opportunity to go through our communities, and they're looking for these kinds of things. Everybody is interested in buying local and supporting the farmers in our communities.

Over the years, I have benefited from this farm gate sale at our own farm. It wasn't personal benefit in the sense that I was standing at the roadside with the sweet corn, but my kids did. It was a summer job for them. It gave them an opportunity to learn about business. They had an opportunity to understand input and the agricultural practices of growing, in their case, sweet corn. They learned about things like customer relations and customer service. Our farm is situated en route to Lake Huron, so we are en route to Port Franks, Ipperwash and Grand Bend. People come by from urban areas in the summertime and they see the sign that says there's sweet corn available and they'll stop. I remember very well my daughters managing the stand while their brother ran in and out of the sweet corn field with the wheelbarrow and kept putting the sweet corn in, and people were buying it as fast as he could get it out to the side of the road. It was an interesting exercise in understanding public relations and how important customer service is when you are doing these kinds of things.

We talk about the need to address this policy. I do understand that the Ministry of Transportation is looking at its sign policy, and I hope that when they do this they will address this specific interest, because, again, I find that this is a seasonal opportunity. It's an opportunity for farmers to increase and add to their income. But as I said, it's also an opportunity for our young farm people to have some employment and to learn business skills. I think good signage is part of running a business. You need to be able to make your way to the farm gate to be able to buy the products.

The member from Welland was talking about the need to bring local and Ontario product into Queen's Park. I want to certainly commend Speaker Steve Peters for the

work that he has done in bringing Ontario produce and products into our cafeteria and dining room. I noticed that in the members' lobbies, on each side, there are now apples and pears, and they're seasonal right now. You can get apple juice and other Ontario juices there, and those are the kinds of things that I think we, as members, are obligated to do—support our farmers and our communities by having these products here. I find, again, that it's a very important thing that we're doing.

As I move through and look at this bill, I can only say that I'm fully in support of this. I think it makes absolute sense. We need to be able to promote the Buy Ontario and Pick Ontario Freshness campaigns that our government has put \$56 million into for the next five years.

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They did a survey through Foodland Ontario. The survey says that 78% of the shoppers can recall having seen or heard the Foodland Ontario advertisements. Some 78% recognize what these ads are doing, and I'm sure almost that many can sing it, so it certainly is important. And they say close to 94% recognize the Foodland Ontario symbol. So we know that our consumers are looking for these products, they're buying them in their grocery stores. Now we want to make sure that they have the opportunity to buy them, not only at their local stores, but also from their local farmers.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I welcome Bill 98. I support the bill. I congratulate the member from Oxford for bringing it forward. Through my office, we've been fighting this issue for several years now, specifically on behalf of Charles Emre, who was mentioned earlier, an asparagus grower down in my riding. Also thank you to Brenda, another asparagus grower in our area, for being here this afternoon on behalf of the OFVGA.

Charles Emre has a number of farms, and for the past 23 years he's had a sign—on provincial Highway 24, just a couple of miles north of my constituency office—that says, "Fresh Asparagus for Sale," and it gives you a clue as to where to go to get it, because you can't get it right on that provincial highway. Locally grown produce: There's an urgent need to resolve not only his issue, but the issue of many farmers across the province. Hence, we have legislation before us—the Signage to Promote Ontario Grown Agricultural Food Products Act, 2008—something that I would say every one of us in this House agrees with.

It was a year ago last summer that Mr. Emre's sign turned up missing. He stormed into our office. He was furious. Thanks to my staff, we did a search and we discovered it in the MTO yard in Brantford—it had been confiscated by workers—and made arrangements for it to be returned. I understand it was taken during night time.

This year, after arranging to post the sign again on a private field beyond the ministry's road allowance, Mr. Emre received what amounts to a "cease and desist or else" letter from the MTO.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: What kind of government is this?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Well, I'll quote from this government letter: "This letter serves as notice to cease this activity and remove the device immediately.... Failure to do so may result in removal of the device ... and may result in charges being laid."

Charles Emre reports that, as soon as that sign got ripped down by government, his sales dropped 50%, especially on those big spring weekends when you get your sales.

The news has not been taken well locally. People are behind Mr. Emre and others, some have suggested. I want to quote from a publication, UR Norfolk:

"Anyone wishing to advertise the selling of their home-grown produce in Norfolk should find or build a covered wagon, stack something that looks like a few transparent bags of illegal cigarettes on it, attach a Mohawk Warriors Society flag to this wagon and then attach a large sign on that wagon advertising their particular product for sale.

"That would guarantee that no one from the MTO or the OPP or the RCMP would interfere or dare touch any part of that sign."

These are the times we are living in, certainly in our part of southern Ontario.

The mayor of Norfolk county—he got involved this summer—categorized the move by Ontario's transportation ministry as being, as he characterized it, "abusive and threatening."

Mr. Emre is far from the only farmer to be dissuaded from promoting his produce grown locally. Others have run afoul of MTO authorities enforcing signage laws in this province. Examples across rural areas are inconsistent enforcement, and provincial sign laws lead to confusion, red tape, and lost revenues for Ontario farmers.

For that reason, I fully support Bill 98. We got nowhere dealing with staff summer after summer trying to resolve this issue. Obviously we've got to change the law, and I welcome this proposed legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'm pleased to support this great piece of legislation.

Interjection.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: No, that was me.

There's a long history of farmers being able to sell their produce off their farms. It's guaranteed in the British North America Act, as I understand it. In fact, in the 1950s, when the QEW, the Queen Elizabeth Way, was opened—I guess it was opened before that, but when it became a higher-speed highway in those days, the farmers along the QEW used to sell their produce over the fence to motorists passing by. As traffic moved faster, that became a traffic hazard and it became dangerous, and so a negotiation took place and the farmers built a number of fruit stands along the highways. Of course, I think most people here can remember when those fruit stands were up and operating. They have ceased to operate now, because there is a different, more sophisticated marketing process down there for roadside mar-

kets. Those roadside stands marketed farmers' produce for many, many years through the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and on into the 1990s. That guaranteed farmers the right to sell their product off their farms, and they have that right in Canada.

It's almost a given that when you have the right to sell something, you should also have the right to sign that the products are for sale, and directions for where that sale is taking place. That's the motive behind the member for Oxford's bill. It is one that is long overdue. We hear stories about the Ministry of Transportation having gone to extraordinary lengths—given the conditions of our highways, you should think they would have something else to do; they could go and fill in a pothole or two—to keep their highways pristine of farmers' signs to sell their produce, and that's wrong.

There are so many advantages to buying your produce locally. It's not only more nutritious; there's also the ability to buy varieties that you can't get anywhere else, varieties that perhaps don't ship as well, but have a terrific flavour. One of my favourite strawberry varieties is called Bounty. It does not ship and it does not keep very well, but it has the most fantastic flavour. If you've had the opportunity to eat some wild strawberries with that tremendous flavour, Bounty have a flavour very similar to that—but they will not ship. You can buy them occasionally at roadside stands. I could go on with this subject for a long time. I haven't even started on apples yet, but I see my time is out. I support the—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Member for Oxford, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank the members from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, Peterborough, Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, Welland, Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, Haldimand-Norfolk, and Halton for their kind comments. I was somewhat surprised. I knew that everyone had great interest in making sure that our agriculture community was helped in any way they could, but I did expect that there would be some opposition to looking at something like this. I'm happy to hear that everyone is here and supporting it, and I thank them for that.

I just want to answer the one question that I think the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex mentioned, the issue about how, hopefully, we could change it to allow it to be put on land that did not belong to the person putting out the sign. I just wanted to point out that if you read the bill very closely, you'll find that the only requirement is that the produce or the product on the sign has to be the product of the owner of the sign, not of the property that the sign is being put on. So it is intended to allow a farmer to put it out on the highway where his farm is maybe two or three miles down the country road. I just wanted to clarify that for all those gathered.

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As I said, I want to thank everyone for taking this in the vein in which it was intended, which is to help farmers. We've heard some debate about the zealotness of the enforcers of the law. I just want to point out that

the reason we brought this bill forward was not because people were enforcing the law, but that the law isn't correct, and to change it so they will no longer be required to deal with those signs along the road, if they're properly situated.

I just want to say again, thank you for supporting this bill. If this bill passes, goes to committee and gets third reading, it will once again allow our consumers to follow the signs to the best food product in the world. Thank you very much for allowing me to put this forward.

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

Mr. Peter Kormos: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should move expeditiously to establish and implement a comprehensive jobs program that would contain the following components:

—A jobs-focused Manitoba and Quebec style investment tax credit that would encourage manufacturers and processors to make capital investments and create jobs.

—An industrial hydro rate that would ensure that all major industrial and resource-based consumers would be eligible for a fair new industrial hydro rate guaranteed for five years.

—A "Buy Ontario" program that would ensure that the billions of dollars in transit, other infrastructure investments, and health and education that governments make every year create good-paying jobs in Ontario and not in far away places.

—Job protection legislation that would ensure that laid-off workers receive the severance, back-pay and vacation pay that is owed to them by law.

—A jobs commissioner and other job-sustaining initiatives that would complement the above measures in protecting jobs and preventing plant closures such as the announced John Deere closure in Welland which will cost 800 workers their jobs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Kormos has moved private member's notice of motion number 51. Pursuant to standing order 97, Mr. Kormos, you have up to 12 minutes.

Mr. Peter Kormos: It is trite at this point in this province's history to declare that we are suffering an epidemic of job loss in the resource and manufacturing sectors. It's a pandemic, in that it's affecting workers and communities across this province from the north to the south. Down where I come from in the riding of Welland, Wainfleet, Port Colborne, Welland, Thorold, and St. Catharines, it is as acute as it is anywhere in this province, because those communities in Niagara through to Hamilton are historical industrial manufacturing communities. The economies of those communities are manufacturing economies, industrial economies.

The resolution makes reference to John Deere. We all know John Deere, the green-and-yellow-trimmed agricultural implement, along with residential-use lawnmowers and small garden tractors and the four-wheel vehicles used by farmers and in provincial parks, amongst other places. It's a production facility in Welland that is his-

toric, a profitable production facility, a modern production facility, a production facility in which John Deere had only just made some significant investment, with a workforce—and I know these workers well; I know these women and men really well. I've been in their homes. I've seen them in their churches. I see their kids when I visit their kids' schools, I see them at the Welland market down at the Seaway Mall, I see them at festivals and events in any number of cities across Niagara. These workers are skilled, trained, educated, talented and very, very productive. But their jobs are gone. Not a couple of jobs, not a couple of layoffs—800 jobs gone. And it's not just 800 jobs gone; it's an industrial site that will no longer be paying property taxes, based on an industrial assessment.

What does this mean? Last Saturday, like so many of you, I was with my federal candidate counterpart, Malcolm Allen, down in Welland. We were at the Seaway Mall, saying hi to people, howdy, encouraging them to vote in the federal election. I'll tell you, for a Saturday afternoon, the Seaway Mall was a pretty lonely place. Merchants were coming out of their stores, stopping Malcolm Allen and me, and expressing their concerns about their futures in their retail shops. A hard-working woman with a toy store is worried about bankruptcy. This isn't some multi-layered corporation with all sorts of subcorporations that can cover itself in the event of a—when she goes bankrupt, she goes bankrupt personally. The house is gone. The failure of her shop, which has been great, very efficiently run—and it made modest profits allowing her to support herself. Retailers work 80-hour weeks, with very little pay, no vacation pay, no vacation, but she's been pleased to do it. The bankruptcy of that shop means she loses her home; she becomes not just jobless, but homeless too. She knows, like the other retailers we talked to—and the same goes for any one of you. I'll bet you my colleague from Oshawa, who is going to be talking later this afternoon, could tell you the same thing about retailers in his town. These retailers know within a day when there's been a factory shutdown, when there have been job losses, because people don't buy toys for their kids, they don't buy suits and sports jackets for themselves, they don't buy furniture, they don't buy those modest vacations like a couple of weeks in Florida to escape the brutal weather of January or February. These retailers knew within a day that John Deere shut down, eliminated 800 jobs.

The fact that John Deere will no longer be paying industrial taxes doesn't reduce the city's overall costs. We won't need, down in the city of Welland, any fewer police officers, any fewer firefighters, any fewer city sanitation workers when the John Deere factory closes. The revenue demand is going to remain the same, and that's going to shift on to residential property owners, the same ones who just lost their jobs, who can least afford to pay increased property taxes, because cities across this province have already cut their budgets to the bone. Municipal politicians, God bless them, are the ones who

take the real heat on a daily basis. Municipal politicians have been working very hard, by and large, knowing full well the economic crisis that they're confronting or being confronted with in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario of job losses.

I listened to the government talk about its plan to retrain workers. That's why I made a point of telling you that these John Deere workers, bright young women and men—we're talking workers with not just high school diplomas, but college degrees, university degrees, skilled trades. Retrain them for what?

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When workers were losing their jobs at the beginning down in Niagara, they used to go to Niagara College and some other courses and programs to learn how become blackjack dealers or slot machine technicians so they could work in the casino. Well, the casino is laying people off. There are no jobs at the casino. People are losing jobs at the casino. Retrain them for what?

Mr. Michael Prue: Call centres.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Well, I heard the minister just today tell two stories, one about a worker who had lost his job who was trained in culinary management. Look, I'm a fan of cuisine. I'm the restaurant industry's best friend, let me tell you. I have every respect for people in the culinary trades, but let's be candid: Right now, in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, a diploma in culinary management means what? Assistant manager at a McDonald's, maybe a Burger King. The fact is, only this many of the graduates of those programs are going to become the next Emeril.

Let's talk about yet another worker who lost his job in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario but is in law and security training. He or she might just get hired by the Niagara Regional Police Force, but in all likelihood, and you know this as well as I do, Speaker, that means working as a security guard for \$12 or \$13 an hour on a good day.

There's nothing wrong with those jobs. By God, those people work hard. But you know what? At \$10, \$11 and \$12 an hour, you don't send kids to college and university. At \$10, \$11 and \$12 an hour, you don't pay mortgages. At \$10, \$11 and \$12 an hour, you don't pay taxes, other than the inevitable provincial sales tax and GST. At \$12 an hour, you're not making much of an economic contribution to the economy of your community, your province or your country. You're scraping by. At \$12 an hour, you're spending more time at the Goodwill store—you are, and God bless those people—than you are in the Sears or the Bay.

This government is going to retrain 250,000 industrial manufacturing workers and 250,000 more that we're told will lose their jobs over the course of the next three years of Dalton McGuinty? Train them? I asked this question the other day: What are you going to train them to do? Are you going to put tutus on those John Deere workers, send them down the road to the opera house and have them dance the ballet?

You can retrain people all you want, but they've got to have jobs to go to once they've been retrained. Dalton

McGuinty has abandoned the workers of this province. Dalton McGuinty has abandoned this province's economy.

There are things he can and should be doing right now—Buy Ontario, what a remarkable idea. How effective that may well have been for John Deere and its products. Buy Ontario—what a remarkable idea and what an effective thing that might have been for Abitibi paper in Thorold. An industrial hydro rate—what a remarkable thing that may well have been for John Deere and even more so for Abitibi paper, a large high-electricity consumer. For the paper industry, their big concern all the time, inevitably, is the cost of electrical power. There are things that this government can and should be doing right now, and they're the proposals contained in this resolution.

I say, as New Democrats, we're prepared to stand here and fight for working women and men in this province and their jobs. We simply ask the Liberals to join us. The workers of this province and their families deserve no less.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member for Pickering—

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Pickering—Scarborough East.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: That's the riding that now spans the 905 region and Toronto. It's an interesting environment.

I'm pleased to be able to join this afternoon's debate on the member from Welland's private member's resolution. It certainly has the flavour of resolutions, private members' bills and probably elements of the NDP campaign platform all contained within. I wish I could stand with the level of enthusiasm that was expressed for the private member's bill we dealt with a few moments ago, but I can't do that.

During the almost 15 years and beyond from 1990 to 2003, the province chose to swing dramatically in its adoption of political philosophy. It brought to power an NDP government that turned out to be not only unresponsive to business, but ultimately unresponsive to the workers of the province. The public of the day decided, in 1995, after one mandate, that they wanted a change in direction and swung to the hard right at that point in time, under the premiership of Mike Harris and the then-Conservatives of Ontario, who had, I might suggest, some disdain for workers in the province of Ontario.

In 2003, the province chose to endorse a government that wanted to work, and has worked, with industry and with the workforce in partnership, as well as with partners in government. In 2007, again with a resounding majority, more so than what occurred in the year 2000 with the second majority government of the Harris era, they reinforced the desire for the work that was established from 2003 until then—that first mandate—to be reinforced.

Some of the results of that work also need to be on the record during the discussion of this resolution. We need

to have on the record that, since 2003, there have been almost 450,000 net new jobs established in the province of Ontario, and over 70% of those are good-paying, full-time jobs. That's not to diminish in any way the job losses—manufacturing or otherwise—or the individuals and families who are affected by those job losses, particularly, I would suggest, in communities that are either single-industry or dominated by a single industry, where the impact is felt the hardest. But at the same time, we have to acknowledge this massive increase in employment province-wide and the increase in employment in full-time jobs in the province.

From January to August of this year alone, Ontario created 60% of the new jobs in all of this country. That's not quite the same tone as the resolution and as the mover of the resolution would express. But it does speak to continued successes here in Ontario, in spite of the very uncertain and challenging times we find ourselves in at this point. We have made choices during our time in government to support industry, thus supporting the workers in those industries. That's why, during the early part of our first mandate, we were so adamant about our auto sector strategy and encouraging the federal government to join us in that with the private sector.

We are losing some jobs in the auto sector, and I expect the member from Oshawa will be speaking to this matter—I see him nodding a bit—and will have some comments to make. But some of the jobs we're losing are a result of product choice. When you see a collapse in the truck market, there is little question that some elements of truck building will go by the wayside. But you see Toyota building a new plant in Woodstock, Ontario, that will employ many hundreds of employees. When the likes of GM decided to establish the new Camaro line in Oshawa—and we only hope that that product, as they modify that product, will catch the public's attention and bring back some of those lost jobs. It's why we made the choices about investing in the auto sector, because it is such a key element of the province of Ontario's economic climate. We remain the largest jurisdiction in North America for auto manufacturing.

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We're investing in job skills. We're investing in retraining. We're investing in young people with the Reaching Higher program so we can meet the next generation of needs in this province for workers.

There's not enough time, in the modest time we have, to cover all of the area in any way whatsoever. I simply wanted to reiterate that, in spite of some of the comments that were made in respect to job loss and the like, this province has done and continues to do well considering the economic climate we face here in Canada, in the US and abroad.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Before I get into the substance of what I'd like to say, just a comment with reference to what we just heard from the member for Pickering–Scarborough East relative to what he described as disdain

for workers during the era of the Conservative government. It's interesting that my friend says that. I'm a Conservative, and if somebody says, "You're a Conservative through and through," I would say, "Guilty as charged." For 15 years I ran my own company, and for another 15 years I was a CEO of a large company, and I bet you couldn't find a worker, out of literally thousands of workers who have been in my employ, who would say that I was disdainful of them.

I say that in the context of speaking to this motion, because I find myself in the somewhat unusual position of feeling encouraged, and in cautious support for the motion proposed by my friend, the member from Welland. I say it that way because, first of all, he is my friend; secondly, I say "cautious support" because it's not often that you find a person with Conservative values saying that, on the issue of employing people in this province and on making the economy work again, you would find a fair amount of commonality between conservatism and what the New Democratic Party espouses. So I have to say that I support the spirit of the motion. Surprisingly, it is driven, in my opinion, by what I consider to be, in broad strokes, conservative principles that are underlined in the motion itself.

Normally, when it comes to the economy and when it comes to business, the NDP and my party are on opposite sides, and today I find myself able to relate. What that demonstrates is an amount of creativity and some common cause. I would hope that on all sides of the House—in fact, I would have to say that on all sides of the House, we want the economy to thrive. But at this point, we have to start being in an offensive posture, and I hear too much of a defence from the other side.

I know for a fact that on the backbenches of the government side, there is as much concern at the riding level as there is in our caucus, as there is in the NDP caucus, and I understand the reason for the motion put forward by the member from Welland. The ideas that are driving this motion are what the McGuinty government ought to be thinking about. But unfortunately, I don't believe that the McGuinty government is doing an awful lot of thinking at all, or at least not sharing any of this creativity that I'm talking about, which it may well have in reserve, and that is providing incentives to stimulate our economy rather than throwing money away and wasting money on band-aid solutions to what I have to describe as an economic crisis. If you've consulted the Toronto Stock Exchange today, we're down over 600 points, and this is not in response to what's going on in the States as much as it is looking inward at our own resource sector.

The motion proposes tax credits. Could that lead to business retention? Do you think? The answer is yes, it could. It proposes lower costs of doing business through lowering hydro rates, or at least fixing them for a finite period, which is another reasonable approach and an approach that our party has put forward before.

I want to commend the member for Welland for this motion. It is these kinds of motions that will keep jobs in

Ontario, because they force discussion, and that discussion addresses this crisis—and I do use the word “crisis” again to underscore what we’re dealing with in Ontario now.

You see, what the McGuinty government doesn’t seem to understand is that if you make it easy for business or manufacturing or employers to operate in Ontario, they will stay in Ontario, and that’s what we’re trying to stimulate. It means that our skilled workforce will have jobs to go to in Ontario. Instead, Premier McGuinty has turned Ontario into a sinking ship and is forcing our most skilled labour to flee for the shores of Saskatchewan or Alberta or other provinces, while Céline Dion sings the theme song from Titanic.

This position is oftentimes characterized by the government as not standing up for Ontario. I think the best thing I or my friend from Welland can do as a member, in terms of standing up for Ontario, is to discuss motions like this and to come together—I would hope all three parties and our independent friend—to look at ways together to come up with something for Ontario that stops the bleeding.

Instead of showing leadership, the McGuinty government is happily skipping down the yellow brick road and leaving the opposition to come up with ways to save our province. Let’s do it together is what I propose.

Again, I want to commend the member for Welland for his work on this motion. When I listen to him speak, I enjoy the kind of passion that I hear. It is not just his riding of Welland—he knows this all too well—a more rural riding, a smaller-town riding, a riding with agriculture and industry in it, compared to, say, my riding of Thornhill, which is an urban riding, doesn’t have an awful lot of industry, has some retail, and \$100,000 is the average yearly family income—very different from Welland; and yet there is the same kind of discussion as I talk to people in the Tim Hortons of my riding, or at the doors. People are concerned about their jobs; they’re concerned about their families; they’re concerned about their kids in university.

It’s something that we share, so once again, I commend my friend from Welland, and I will be supporting this motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: The job crisis: We believe in a good job for everyone, because a good job is the best way to make sure working women and men share Ontario’s prosperity.

In Ontario, manufacturing and forestry jobs are some of our very best jobs. But there’s a problem in Ontario’s manufacturing and forestry heartlands: a job crisis. Since July 2004, almost 230,000 Ontarians in the manufacturing sector have lost their jobs.

I shouldn’t have to tell the members across the floor how important manufacturing and resource jobs are to this province. These jobs are not just important because in addition to paying better, these jobs also come with good pensions and good benefits. All this is important,

but there’s another reason why maintaining and strengthening Ontario’s manufacturing and resource sector is crucial. Dalton McGuinty likes to pretend that the current job crisis is limited only to manufacturing and forestry, but anyone who knows anything about the Ontario economy knows that manufacturing and resource represent the foundation on which Ontario’s service economy rests. If you have problems in the manufacturing and resource sector, you will eventually have problems in the retail, financial services and other areas of this service economy.

The second quarter economic accounts released by the Minister of Finance a few days ago are disturbing in this respect. The real news from the report isn’t just that output from the manufacturing sector continues to decline. The real news is that when you combine reports from the first two quarters of this year, it becomes clear that the rest of the economy is no longer picking up the slack, and we’re ending up with declining output in many sectors of the broader economy. The end result is cratering manufacturing sectors, surrounded by a no-growth economy.

I think this means that the working families of this province are facing economic challenges they’ve never faced before. In fact, I believe there are fundamental changes taking place in the economy that require innovative, activist government action now.

Due to the global financial crisis and the failed federal and provincial policies, Ontario’s economic foundation is threatening to crumble, and I believe that government must respond now.

The NDP believes that the government has to play an active role in protecting good-paying jobs when those jobs can’t be saved. Making sure that workers who have committed a lifetime to an employer are treated fairly and given every opportunity to return to the labour force in comparable jobs, not lesser jobs. The McGuinty government doesn’t believe in an activist government. Mr. McGuinty has stood on the sidelines showing absolutely no leadership, while factories and mills downsize and close, costing hundreds of thousands of workers.

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I’m here to tell you that the NDP doesn’t see things that way. We believe that sometimes the market works and sometimes it doesn’t, and when it doesn’t—and this is one of those times in Ontario’s economic history when the market definitely isn’t working—the government must step in on behalf of hard-working men and women and set things right.

Here are just some of the policies the NDP has been fighting for, for the last couple of years: a five-year guarantee on industrial hydro rates, a jobs protection commissioner to help at-risk companies overcome financial difficulties and save jobs, the Buy Ontario policy and tougher plant closure legislation that would ensure that everything is done to prevent profitable plants or mills from closing; in addition, no longer advance-notice and enhanced mandated severance; expansion of severance eligibility and increase in advance notice in mass layoff

situations, pensions and wage protection that would make sure that workers get every penny they are owed from their employer when their company becomes insolvent or goes into bankruptcy—I believe I brought that forward in Bill 6, which fell on deaf ears—and finally, a refundable manufacturing resource investment tax credit that would provide real incentive for manufacturers—equipment and machinery—that leads to high-paying, good-quality jobs.

These are just some of the constructive ideas we've put forward in the past few years to deal with Ontario's job crisis, and every last one of them has been shot down. No, I'm not saying that these ideas are the whole story, and I want to make it clear that we in the NDP will continue to look for new and creative ideas to deal with unprecedented economic crisis.

There are three other job-related issues that are important. Before I conclude, I want to address three other closely related issues that the NDP believe requires reform to make economic security a reality for Ontario workers: labour and pension law reform, and enhanced regulation of the financial markets. Week after week, New Democrats rise in this House and speak to the need for labour law reform in this province. For far too long, labour laws in this province have tilted overwhelmingly in favour of employers and against men and women who attempt to exercise their constitutional right to bargain collectively. It is also a fact that for far too long, workers who try to form a union in this province have been intimidated, threatened and even fired for their union activities. I want to say this directly to the Premier: If, in the province of Ontario, you can sign a card and become a member of the Liberal Party of Ontario, then you should damn well be able to sign a card and become a member of a democratically controlled union.

I also want to say a few words about pension reform. Quite frankly, defined pension reforms are in serious trouble in this province. In the private sector, the proportion of workers covered by these plans has fallen from 30% in the late 1980s to just under 20% today. The trend line isn't good and the frustrating part of it is that it doesn't have to be this way. We desperately need to reform the pension rules of this province so that employers with existing pension plans are no longer allowed to walk away from their retirement obligations to their employees after a lifetime of dedication. We also need rules that encourage the formation of far more new, defined pension plans in workplaces where workers currently have no pension coverage. The time has come for new rules that encourage multi-employer pensions and other innovative plans, so that the men and women of this province can retire with dignity and security. We, on this side of the House, look forward to the Arthurs pension report, which I believe will be released relatively soon.

Finally, I'd like to say a word or two about the ongoing crisis gripping the world's financial markets. Listen, I don't pretend to be an expert in any of this, but I was struck by a recent interview with Joseph Stiglitz, an American economist who won a Nobel Prize in eco-

nomics a few years back, and presumably knows his way around these issues. Stiglitz made the case for a financial product safety commission, just like we have for consumer goods. His reasoning is that, of late, financiers have been inventing products not intended to manage risk but to create risk. Stiglitz also makes the case for greater transparency, yet he makes the interesting observation that all regulators knew these dangerous financial products were out there but they were just too complex and no one could understand them.

In conclusion, I can only speak from my perspective about Hamilton. Hamilton has been decimated in the last few years with the exit of major manufacturers in our community—17,000 jobs related to the Hamilton area in the last 10 years. It's incredible. But what is going on? I can name at least 50 major manufacturers that have left Hamilton, but I can say that under this present government, under this situation, not one major manufacturer has come into Hamilton. You wonder why we're in trouble? We're not attracting business. As my colleague from Welland says, you can train all the people you want, but when they're getting on trains, when the Premier of Saskatchewan is coming here and signing people up to go to Saskatchewan and they're going to the tar sands after we paid to train them—they have to leave because there are no jobs in Ontario. This has got to stop.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I've got to comment on the member from Pickering when he talks about the disdain the Conservatives have for workers and jobs. I think he's got that exactly opposite: Conservatives worship jobs; we worship workers. Jobs are the way you keep score in an economy. In our term of office, after five years of being in power in Ontario, we had created a million new jobs. That's more than twice as many as your government has created in your first five years. Yes, a million new jobs mean a million new dreams, a million new hopes and a million new lives. Jobs are the way you keep score in an economy. I don't know where the member from Pickering comes off talking about how this government or any government that we've been part of would have disdain for jobs.

But we're here to talk about a comprehensive job program from the member for Welland—Welland-Thorold or just Welland?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Welland-Thorold's fine with me too.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Welland-Thorold—yes, the great city of Thorold: It's the only place in Ontario I know of where you can sit and watch a baseball game and have a ship rise out of the ground; in 15 or 20 minutes, a full ship is sitting there in front of you where none existed before. It's like magic. You've been to that ball diamond.

There are a number of components in this particular proposal. One of course is a jobs-focused Manitoba and Quebec style investment tax credit that would encourage manufacturers and processors to make capital investment

in jobs. This is like a reverse capital tax. This government has done away with the capital tax in Ontario, phased it out. It will be gone in 2010, I believe, and that's a good thing; that's a very positive thing. When you want companies to invest, you don't tax them every time they make an investment.

The next stage to that competitiveness would be a review of the provincial sales tax, because about 40% or 50% of the provincial sales tax comes from investments by business into capital goods or in raw products. Taxing businesses for their input costs is also a negative thing to do in an economy. It would be far better if we could find a way to harmonize the PST with the GST, which would have the PST then act like a value-added tax. It would not be a hardship on employers, and they would become 4%, 5% or 6%—depending on what their manufacturing and purchases are, they would become that much more competitive. It would be a good idea.

This idea of tax relief is a good one, particularly coming from the NDP. It's not something that I would have thought the NDP would support, but we hold out hope that the NDP are learning. And if the NDP can learn, how far behind could the Liberals be? It would appear they're quite a ways behind, but perhaps they can catch up with this. It's a way to attract smart business. Smart businesses go to low-cost jurisdictions.

Of course, businesses move slowly over time. It's not something that happens in the blink of an eye. I would suggest that it takes about a year and a half before you start to see the effects of these kinds of things, that there's a lag time in there. But when it does happen, it tends to build momentum, and that momentum can be a very powerful thing because it creates jobs. Every new job is a new taxpayer and every new taxpayer allows you to make the investments in health care, in education, in the environment and those things that Ontarians expect their government to fund for them in a very real way.

1500

This Liberal government has over the past five years been in the business of picking winners and losers, not making the entire business community competitive but to pick a winner here and a winner there and reinvesting in those companies, trying and hoping that they are going to be successful. All too often, we have seen examples where the government has not picked well, where some of those companies that have been picked have done poorly or have laid off workers and been unsuccessful in their expansion dreams. That's too bad, because that's taxpayers' money. That's very hard-earned taxpayers' money that has been spent on these projects that have not always been successful. Whereas if you spend that money in making your jurisdiction competitive, every business wins. Every single business in Ontario wins when the jurisdiction becomes just that much more competitive, and that's a good thing.

The tax credit, of course, is a good idea. I think it's one part of a tax strategy. As a Conservative, I would suggest that perhaps it doesn't go far enough. It goes a long way for the NDP. I would suggest the Liberals

should be in the middle and they should be bringing these kinds of things forward and encouraging these kinds of tax incentives.

I'm quickly running out of time. The industrial hydro rate—again, a good idea. It should not just last for five years. The pulp and paper industry isn't going to go away in five years. I don't think somebody's going to open a paper mill for only five years. I think that competitive hydroelectric rates have—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I have but a couple of minutes, so I want to talk about the recession as I see it happening in Toronto, because oftentimes the city in which I live and in which this building exists seems to be jobs-reduction proof, and that is in fact not the case.

I had an opportunity last night to go along the Danforth, to many of the stores and buildings that were there and the places where people worked, and I saw them boarded up. I had not seen this for a long time. The recession is coming to Toronto and the recession is here. People who had good jobs in those stores and good jobs in the factories that surround them are now starting to leave. It's difficult in a place like Toronto, as I'm sure it is in Hamilton or any places where the jobs were there a long time ago, where the factories are old, where the technology and the times have not kept up with them—those are among the first to leave, and I would suggest that we in Toronto need to do something about it.

I'm here to talk about—because I have such a limited period of time—the Buy Ontario policy, because I think that is the one key factor that we can do to turn this thing around. When I was mayor of East York, we had a Buy Ontario policy and a Buy East York policy. It was remarkable in the way we were able to produce jobs locally, to keep those jobs and keep the factories going.

I would suggest that the Liberals need very strongly to look at this: to buy cars made in Ontario, to buy all of the factory-produced goods that are made in this province. If the government only does that one thing, if the government only agrees to that, we can create and keep thousands of jobs. We are a big consumer in this province—the province itself is a big consumer. It needs to be done. Please, seriously consider this motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: I heard some very rational commentary from the member from Welland. I think that one of the things that would really help is if we started to understand that unless we start to get the message clearly across to the people of Ontario, and we get the message across to all members of the federal Parliament—that we have to have a new paradigm when it comes to Ontario's economy, and that new paradigm cannot be built on the shaky foundation of equalization. We on this side of the House said the same thing to the Martin Liberals; we're saying the same thing to the Harper Conservatives. We said that it is fundamentally impossible to bring about the new economic paradigm unless there is a change made.

Year after year, day after day, whether it's the people in Welland or the people in East York or the people in west Toronto, we can't rebuild our economy through this transition unless we're allowed—that is, the people of Ontario; not the government of Ontario, not Premier McGuinty's money. It is the money of the people of Ontario, through their income tax, through their small business taxes.

Why should a small businessman in Leamington be giving half of his GST and small business tax to support \$7 daycare in Quebec when we can't even afford daycare here in Ontario? The people in Leamington are supporting lower tuition in the province of Quebec. God love them in Quebec and God love them in the other provinces for having gotten this sweetheart equalization deal. But it is not right, day after day, to take the hard-earned money out of the pockets of the people of Welland and keep shipping it to other provinces. Can you imagine what the people of Welland or the people of St. Catharines or the people of Scarborough could do if they were allowed to keep some of that money so they could help small business, so they could put money into roads, into green jobs? But we can't do that because of equalization.

As I said, it's not just the Harper government that has done this. This has been in effect for decades, because the people of Ontario have always been very generous in sharing their economic wealth.

If you're out of work in Timmins, why should you have to wait more weeks to be eligible for employment insurance? Why should you have to go through so many hoops to be eligible in Ontario, whereas it's automatic in these other provinces?

Anyway, these are some of the things we have to change. We can talk about all these new programs until the cows come home—and the member has some good ideas here—but fundamentally we have to shift that economic equalization paradigm. If we don't do that, we're going to have a hard time in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I've got to say it's an interesting argument the government puts forward: We can't do anything because we have to deal with the bad federal government that's not giving us what we need to be good to the workers in York, the workers in Hamilton and the workers in Timmins.

I want to remind this House that equalization was around in the 1960s, and Ontario had jobs, Ontario was building an economy, and we were giving far more money per capita than we do now into equalization. Don't argue to Ontarians and to me that the reason why you can't respond to the crisis of jobs and the economy in Ontario is because of the bad equalization deal that we may or may not have with Ottawa. That's poppycock.

The issue is, you have tools. You're the government. You're the guys with the limo. You have tools that you can take out of your tool box that you can bring for solutions to the problems in our communities.

I'll give you an example. The communities of Opasatika and Smooth Rock Falls, which both lost their only employers—if we'd had a jobs commissioner, as is being proposed in this particular motion, the jobs commissioner could have sat down with those companies and said, "What can be done to save the jobs that we have today?" If at the end of the day the jobs couldn't have been saved, they could, at the very least, through the jobs commissioner, lever the tools of government to say, "Okay, if the mill is shutting down, let's keep the fibre tied to the community, so that when the economy comes back around, there will be a successor employer."

We have tools in government that we can use without having to whine to the federal government. The problem is an Ontario problem. Yes, it's the world economy; yes, it's North America; yes, it's Canada. But each government has tools at its disposal to be able to respond to the crisis. What we're saying to you is, stop blaming the federal government. This is a problem that we need to face in Ontario. Solicit their help, yes. I have no argument with that. But use the tools that you have to assist the workers, and you can do that by voting for this motion—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

1510

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I only have but a few minutes to talk about the reality of the tools that we have put in place and how those are positively impacting our communities. I'm glad that the member opposite started using the phraseology of tools because I can tell you that the advanced manufacturing investment strategy, \$500 million, is a real, concrete tool that businesses analyze and look at when they're making a decision whether or not to invest in Ontario. The second-career strategy, and the funds that are available to assist those who need to retrain, is a concrete deliverable that our government has put in place that is having a positive impact on the lives of people who have been caught in an old-time economic manufacturing sector and want to transition to a new and modern job. That's a real, concrete initiative that is being put in place, along with the Next Generation of Jobs Fund. These are real things that our government has created that are making a difference when businesses around the world are determining whether they want to come and create jobs in Ontario.

This government is standing up. It's fighting for jobs around the world, to bring those jobs here. It's fighting to keep the jobs that are here. It's helping individuals transition and learn skills to get them ready for the new type of job. We are on the offensive. We are out around the world saying, "Come to Ontario." We're working in partnership with both business and labour, the investment sector and the education sector to say, "Come to Ontario; bring your jobs here. We will partner with you, and we will work in partnership with you to make sure that we create the economy of the 21st century." That's what we're doing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Welland, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you to all those members who participated in this debate.

With respect, I say to this government: What did its policies do to protect the 800 jobs at John Deere in Welland? What did this government do to protect the hundreds of jobs that are being lost in the month of October at Abitibi in Thorold? What did this government do to protect the jobs at Ferranti-Packard in St. Catharines? What did this government do to protect the jobs at GDX in Welland? What did this government do to protect the quarter of a million jobs that have been lost so far? What is this government doing to protect the other quarter of a million that are predicted to be lost over the next three years of McGuinty rule in this province? Because whatever it thinks it has done, it hasn't worked.

This government is bereft of any policies, any strategy, any plan that has any capacity to protect or save, never mind restore, jobs here in the province of Ontario. This government and its ministers seem resigned and quite pleased to see Ontario's economy turn into a Third World one.

Well, I for one, and New Democrats and fair-minded Ontarians of all political stripes haven't given up on the workers of this province. We understand that it's the manufacturing jobs that are the wealth-creation jobs. Without wealth creation, you don't have an economy. Without an economy, you don't have public health care, you don't have public education, you don't have police on your streets. This is a crisis. It's time for this plan now.

MINISTRY OF GOVERNMENT
SERVICES AMENDMENT ACT
(CANADIAN MANUFACTURING
AND ASSEMBLY
OF GOVERNMENT VEHICLES), 2008

LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LE MINISTÈRE
DES SERVICES GOUVERNEMENTAUX
(FABRICATION ET MONTAGE
DE VÉHICULES GOUVERNEMENTAUX
AU CANADA)

Mr. Ouellette moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 92, An Act to amend the Ministry of Government Services Act to regulate the acquisition of government vehicles / Projet de loi 92, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère des Services gouvernementaux afin de réglementer l'acquisition de véhicules gouvernementaux.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to the standing order 97, Mr. Ouellette, you have up to 12 minutes.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: As I mentioned earlier in discussions today, Oshawa is currently celebrating the 100th anniversary of McLaughlin-Buick. Many didn't realize at that time that after a fire in the plant where Sam McLaughlin was producing, he looked to relocate, and it

was the vision of Oshawa coming forward with a \$50,000 interest-free loan that convinced Sam McLaughlin that Oshawa, Ontario, wanted to work with the auto sector.

And how the auto sector has seen some changes in growth. We've seen the 1965 Auto Pact, which in its time was a leader aiding production of the vehicles made in Oshawa, Ontario and Canada.

For those who don't know, essentially the auto pact stated that for every vehicle sold in Canada, Canada had to produce one vehicle. That's the baseline of what took place in the auto pact. Currently, you see approximately one vehicle coming into Canada and being sold in Canada for every three vehicles that go out. The auto pact was a great way to start moving the auto sector to becoming the number one employer. This aided in the growth of the Canadian auto sector's production, from 846,000 vehicles annually to more than 2.6 million, and close to \$100 billion in value.

The World Trade Organization came forward with a decision that the auto pact was improper and outside the guidelines of global trading, and ended the 35-year agreement.

Ontario has had several other competitive advantages as well, including OHIP and, at the time, workers' compensation, and of course, the value of the dollar.

Other jurisdictions, having seen the way Ontario and employers had benefited, and that we had that competitive advantage, compensated in their structures for health care and workers' compensation, eliminating the advantage Ontario had at that time.

There have been numerous changes in the auto sector sales structure. Many may remember—it was before my time—that individuals used to pick up vehicles in Oshawa, drive them out west to sell them and get their flights back. It was something that a lot of summer students and college and university kids did; they took that long trek out west, because it was cheaper for us to drive vehicles out there and sell them.

Not only that; I know of a number of dealers who used to offer, not so long ago when the value of the dollar was substantially less, to let you come back six months later, after buying your truck, and they would give you the exact price you had paid for it, as long as it was in the same condition, even if there was mileage on it. Then they would sell those vehicles in the southern States, because it was cheaper that way.

It also eliminated a bit of a problem, but that's business doing business. The problem was that they couldn't sell a new vehicle, so they had to wait six months. What was taking place was that individuals in Oshawa were getting brand new trucks every six months, and because of the value of the dollar, it was cheaper to take them down to the States. Well, since the value is gone, so is that opportunity.

We've also heard about how cheap it is, in certain situations, to buy a vehicle in the States and bring it back. Part of the reason for that was lease buyback arrangements. For those who haven't heard, General Motors is

moving away from leasing arrangements, because when the Canadian dollar increased, vehicles were being sold cheaper in the States and that virtually nullified a lot of the leasing buyback arrangements, which upset a lot of people and destroyed their leasing market. I think that's part of the reason they eliminated the leasing component in Oshawa.

Another factor that contributed to changes in the auto sector is the split between the CAW and the UAW. I'm sure the members who were speaking before me—the member from Welland—know very well that the individuals in the UAW were posturing for, and making proposals for, the same jobs as the CAW, which has led to a lot of discrepancies between the two, and the compensation—I mentioned earlier about OHIP, workers' compensation and the allowances that were made—now made them competitive, and Ontario and Canada have lost a lot of those jobs. Those are just some of the things, because those two organizations were fighting for the same jobs.

Oshawa has done a great job in building jobs. We've won awards through the years for the best production, the most productivity and the best-produced vehicles, yet we're still seeing the decline in the sales.

The end result is that Canada built a dependency on the auto sector for the jobs. It was the number one producer of jobs in Canada. The auto sector, with its supply companies—whether it was individuals delivering goods, bringing them back and forth—was the number one sector producing jobs in Canada. Who would have been able to foresee the impact of the failure of the US economy and what has taken place there?

The end result is that they're closing plants. As Mr. Kormos mentioned earlier, when those closures take place and the truck plant closes in Oshawa, the taxation base that would contribute to the city of Oshawa, not only for the truck plant but the north plant—it's gone—who is going to pick that up? We can expect some tax increases as a result of that, because they're still going to want the roads ploughed by the region and everything else that takes place. How is that going to impact the community? It's going to impact everybody quite substantially.

I know that my federal counterpart, Colin Carrie, established a federal committee to do what he could. He met with General Motors and the auto sector to find out what they wanted. Essentially, there were about five key sectors that they wanted some support on. The province, I'm sure, contributed in some fashion to that, although I don't yet fully understand the five-point plan. The only concern I have with it is that we've lost over 250,000 jobs.

1520

I know the feds contributed to research and development. I know the Prime Minister attended when the engineering department opened in Oshawa. It talked about border crossings and how to make it easier and more transparent for the auto sector to go back and forth—and a supportive tax structure, as the NDP men-

tioned earlier on, to aid in attracting businesses and retaining them here in the province of Ontario. As well, Ontario did contribute to a number of areas, and I acknowledge that.

The difficulty is, we've still lost thousands of jobs in my community, in the auto sector and in the manufacturing sector throughout the province of Ontario. The number one thing that we're constantly hearing about is, when you build a dependency on a number one purchaser, being the United States, and they go bad or they turn and look somewhere else, then you're in trouble. That's what happened in Ontario and in the auto sector.

We hear things about quality and production. I know Mr. Arthurs mentioned the Camaro coming to Oshawa. The expectation is about 100,000 to 120,000 units annually. You constantly hear from the media about who wants these gas-guzzling muscle cars? The reality is that General Motors, for example, this year and the past year won the green vehicle of the year, which was a Yukon. Can you imagine an SUV winning the green vehicle of the year? It was announced in California. It's receiving virtually the same gas mileage as a Toyota Corolla.

Interjection.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Well, that's the claim and that's what won down there. Yes, that's what's taking place. It's because the workers in our communities are producing great, quality vehicles and moving forward.

Now, what can we do? We've lost jobs. The government's job, in my opinion, is to create an environment that attracts, retains and promotes a healthy employment sector, where one can be in an environment where you can live, work and raise a family in a healthy environment.

In my research, I've now introduced five bills—a couple of them twice now—to try and address, or to send a message on, how we can help the auto sector. One was some tax relief for trucks, because there was up to about \$7,000 in additional taxes added onto every one of those trucks. We tried to eliminate that. When times are good and they can afford to pay it, then pay it, but when times are bad and they need some support, let's get rid of it.

Today's bill is designed to do something a little bit different. It formalizes the unwritten procurement policy within the government of Ontario. Essentially, it establishes the priority where Ontario-made vehicles are at the top of the list. It also adds a number of other components as well. Just think about all the government vehicles, whether it's the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Ministry of Transportation and everything else, and all the vehicles that are utilized there, and how that may send a message out to those individuals.

It adds another area as well, in the renting or leasing of vehicles. If a government member is out from Toronto going to Thunder Bay, they would have to go, essentially, through that same process. That would expose individuals to make sure that they know the high quality of Ontario product that's out there. Not only that, but the leasing and rental companies would then come forward

and hopefully increase their fleet of available domestic product and make sure people have access.

Quite frankly, I would think that the government employees in the province of Ontario, one of the largest group of individuals, as they travel throughout the province making sure everything runs in the fashion that it should, are the ones that lease a high component of the leased and rental vehicles that are out there. This would add incentive to that.

I'm sure my friends from the NDP would like to hear this part as well. It also gives a little kick or a little, how shall I say it, push to the auto sector. It changes the component in the structure in such a way that the determining factor is made in Ontario and made in Canada. Currently, the structure is based on North American free trade; it's 62% content. Content is determined based on the value of production. What I hear is that you can take an engine, say, from Windsor that's produced at a value of \$10,000, and produce that in an Asian country for \$2,000. You get the same component produced at a reduced rate, yet you have a lower concentration of North-American-manufactured components. The end result is you get more products being brought into those vehicles.

What this does is establish 62% based on the volume of production, so that that engine, if it represents 10% of the vehicle's manufacturing, still represents 10% whether it's made in Asia or in Windsor. That way, there would be incentive to have a 62% made-in-Canada component. It's trying to send a message that we need to recognize this; it supports a lot of the other sectors that are out there within the automotive supply industries. They'll come forward and you'll see a lot more individuals—quite frankly, with the high gas dollar, local production will aid in making sure that we can have things produced here as opposed to other jurisdictions and trying to ship them in.

This would essentially bring closer—it would give a better perspective and incentive for the local producers to make sure that there is a high component of goods manufactured right here in Ontario, and in Canada.

I'm hoping that this bill will go to committee so that the province can then have the auto sector come forward and hear from them so that they will give us some insight as to how they feel that we could move forward. I tried, with an open hand, to see if the Premier would be receptive to an all-party committee, and this is the next step in trying to move that forward by allowing the auto sector to come forward and work with the government and see if we can assist. Government's job is to create those environments that will allow business to flourish and prosper, and one of the ways is to lead by example. This is one example of how we can start.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member for Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker. I stand in support of this bill. I know that Mr. Ouellette, the member for Oshawa, has a long-time interest in this matter. He and I have discussed it many, many times, and I appreciate his putting this bill forward and having the

opportunity not only to speak to it but to vote for it and to hope that it—it's got to get to committee. It's got to go to committee so that it can be refined—whether you want to quibble about the 62% value or 62% timely, do that in committee—although Mr. Ouellette, the author of the bill, makes an interesting proposition here and anticipates some of the angles that might be used.

I've got to tell you, when I see public dollars—and I swear, I could be wrong, but I'm sure I saw one of those Mercedes-Benz Smart cars being used here in the city of Toronto as a parking enforcement vehicle. It just rots my socks. I can't for the life of me understand why the public—we're in the midst of this job crisis and we understand that the auto sector is the very core of manufacturing here in Ontario, at the very heart of wealth creation. The author of this bill, Mr. Ouellette, talks about the government, and he's referring in this instance—in my reading of the bill—to the government of Ontario. But I tell you, the committee that considers this bill may well consider saying that any public expenditure in which there's a penny of provincial money, where there is the acquisition of vehicles, should ensure that it's in compliance with this bill.

We're in deep trouble. Look, I take no joy in being a doom-and-gloom predictor, but we're in deep trouble. I don't worry so much about my generation as I do about young folks 20, 21, 22 years old—many of your kids or grandkids. For the life of me, I don't envy them at all. My generation, those baby boomers—I was born in 1952—probably enjoyed the very best that Canada has had to offer. I suppose what drives me is that, yes, my generation of baby boomers, as a result of the hard work and sacrifices of our parents and grandparents, enjoyed the best that Canada has to offer. Surely, we have a responsibility to pass a legacy on to our own children that's as least as good as the one that we enjoyed.

This bill is consistent with the NDP's Buy Ontario policy. There is simply no argument to be made for not adopting this policy by way of this legislation and, for that matter, extending it so that municipalities and any transfer payment agency—think about that, any transfer payment agency—is bound by it as well.

I know autoworkers, I've known them all my life. I know them down where I come from in Niagara and I know them across the province. I was up in Oshawa with Howard Hampton when those workers were fighting to keep their truck line there. Heck, I drive their cars. I suppose the problem I have as an automotive consumer is that I'm driving a 1994 Chev pickup with hundreds of thousands of kilometres on it and it's not ready to go yet. Part of me almost wishes there'd be some rust or some mechanical problems because it would be kind of fun to get a new one, but at the same time I'm more than pleased to have a pickup truck that I—you know what it's like when you drive a pickup truck, don't you, Speaker? It's like owning a pool: All of a sudden you have more friends in your neighbourhood than you ever knew, because somebody has got to take something to the dump on Saturday morning, somebody needs some-

thing moved, somebody's kids are moving out of university residence. The deal is, "We'll give you our car. Let us use your truck for the day." A 1994 Chev pickup—before they had a 1985, the S-10. I've also got a 1991 Buick Park Avenue—1991, a beautiful car. Again, I wish that thing would start rusting, but it keeps running.

1530

There's simply no excuse not to buy vehicles that are North American in the broadest concept and quite frankly that are Ontarian in a very direct way. That assembly line in Oshawa has year after year after year won award after award, not from the industry, but from consumer groups. That Chevy Impala that they're putting out of there, those things just won't give up. And now they've got this new Buick Allure. There's a different name for it in Canada than there is in the States. I'll explain that some other time because it's a fascinating little story. But the Buick Allure, Chevy Impala—great cars. Heck, you want a big gas guzzler? Go down to St. Thomas and buy yourself a Crown Vic, Mercury Marquis, whatever you want to call it. They're great fleet vehicles. Cops have been using them for years and continue to use them. Limo services use them and continue to use them. You want economy cars? They're being made in Ontario too.

In difficult times, in times of crisis, it's time for drastic measures. I wish I could call this a drastic measure but it's just, quite frankly, such a modest proposal. It's so inoffensive. It doesn't require any sacrifice on anybody's part. It simply says to elected people in this province that if they want to be serious about keeping jobs here, they've got to be serious about investing in those jobs as consumers too. And I say this: There isn't a member of this Legislative Assembly on the public payroll who has any business driving anything into this parking lot other than something that's made one way or another by auto workers in North America. Down where I come from we've got folks in St. Catharines who work really hard at GM components, a quality product. Jobs were lost there—and the impact of auto job losses is huge. You're talking about a ratio of 6 or 7 to 1. For every auto job that you lose, in the community you lose six or seven other jobs as well. That's huge.

I encourage support, and I look forward to discussing this bill in committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Charles Sousa: It's a pleasure for me to speak on this bill. I'll be sharing my time with our member, our colleague from Guelph.

I applaud the member from Oshawa for his interest in improving our auto fleet and for bringing forward this bill that intends to ensure that we do everything we can to support the Ontario auto sector. I would like to begin by saying that I agree with this general principle. Who can argue against the principle of supporting our manufacturers? In fact, that's why the McGuinty government has been committed to ensuring investment and innovation in the auto sector right from its inception. We have always made sure Ontario-manufactured vehicles are a

significant component of our government's passenger vehicle fleet and we've continued to improve our policies over time.

Ongoing suggestions to improve our manufacturing sector, to improve our environment and to facilitate a greener economy are welcome. To this end, the government fleet is also becoming leaner and greener and so is our government. As parliamentary assistant to a minister who is passionate about finding ways to reduce our environmental burden, I am proud that there are many examples of positive change we can point to. At MGS, we are making it easier for all kinds of small and medium-sized enterprises to do business with government. Over the past two years, recommendations from the Doing Business with the Ontario Government Task Force have been implemented and we're moving forward with removing these barriers one by one. That's why we've been eager to listen to Ontario businesses. We've taken a scan across government and we've asked a simple question: How can we make this easier for Ontario companies to do business with the government?

We're answering this by revising procurement documents—IT terms and conditions, proof of insurance, financial statements, contract requirements and reducing paper burden—and allowing for more regional-based procurement, which means increasing the frequency of vendors that are permitted to bid on only one Ontario region. These are key elements of reducing barriers.

We are dedicated to reducing our carbon footprint in Ontario. For automotive and auto procurement, this means putting greater emphasis on the acquisition of hybrid and alternative technology vehicles. Our government is serious about this, serious enough to make available \$1.15 billion through the Next Generation of Jobs Fund to companies looking to invest in development and manufacturing of green vehicles and cleaner fuel technologies right here in Ontario.

Let me take a moment to outline how we support Ontario's automakers. This government has arrangements with the major auto manufacturers in Ontario to supply approximately 1,500 new vehicles each year. For the 2008 model year, 71.5% of the vehicles purchased were manufactured in Ontario. This is up from 66.2% from the previous model year. When you look at the procurement record of this government and find that it purchased over 70% Ontario-made automobiles, it raises questions about whether Bill 92 may actually water down our existing procurement practices.

We currently have a strong policy that supports Ontario manufacturers and a strong policy for improving our environment. We will continue to support our auto manufacturers while we slash our government's carbon footprint. That's why our OPS fleet consists of 385 hybrid vehicles. That's why Ontario is investing \$15 million in initiatives for automotive manufacturing and innovation, for development of new technologies to make cars lighter and more fuel efficient. That's why in August 2007, the Minister of Government Services approved a green fleet strategy with the following targets for the end

of 2011-12: a 10% reduction in fuel consumption, a 7.7% reduction in the number of vehicles and an overall reduction in the number of kilometres travelled; an increase of hybrid vehicles to 5% of the overall fleet; and a 5% reduction in idling time.

When I say the McGuinty government supports Ontario manufacturers, we don't just talk the talk, we walk the walk. It is evident from our investments that Ontario's investment strategy has helped leverage nearly \$7.5 billion in new automotive investments in Ontario, and all this in only the past four years.

If passed, Bill 92 would require the manufacturing and assembly of vehicles to be first Canadian and then North American if it is cost-effective and operationally feasible. This condition may actually weaken the Ontario policy, which currently does not allow such exemptions. It should also be noted that the bill does not include other types of vehicles. Ontario's fleet policy requires that all types of vehicles be manufactured in North America. When I question whether this bill may water down our current practices, I do so with great respect to the intent of the bill. I also do so with the knowledge that this government's auto strategy is protecting and creating jobs across Ontario. Without it, the issues facing the industry would be more severe. Our procurement policy is part of this strategy.

These are challenging times for the Canadian auto industry as it deals with global competition, weakened demand and a strong Canadian dollar. We will continue to work with all levels of government and industry to address these important issues and foster a strong partnership spirit.

I compliment and thank the member for Oshawa for bringing this bill forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'm honoured to stand in this chamber today and support my colleague from Oshawa. I am very aware that all 107 of us are very zealous in representing our ridings, our constituencies and knowing the particular elements of those constituencies, but I don't think you'd find anybody who is more anxious, more involved and more a part of Oshawa than the member from Oshawa, and I respect him for it—to the point where the first time I ever played golf with him I had to go to Oshawa. But that's another story for another day.

1540

Bill 92, his private member's bill, An Act to amend the Ministry of Government Services Act to regulate the acquisition of government vehicles, is an important piece of legislation for many reasons. The first one that I can think of is it's kind of axiomatic. One would expect this situation to exist whether there were any legislation to enforce it or not—but not so the case. Wouldn't the average Ontarian just assume we do this? The answer is yes, they would—but we don't. In a time when our automotive industry and manufacturing sector is essentially crumbling—and I don't think I'm overstating it to use

that word—we need to start putting the broken pieces back together.

Interjection: Fearmongering again.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I resent the blame game that we're subject to daily in this chamber. We ask repeatedly about the economy of Ontario and what is being done to address it and we get platitudes.

This bill will do some of that reassembly. It's creative, and one of the essential pieces of a solution. "Solution" implies that there is a problem and, yes, we have a problem. Can we get busy now? This is not fear-mongering, this is about getting busy now. Why is it that there is no legislation protecting our own auto industry when it comes to the government buying cars or leasing them, whatever? Well, now there is, and it should be axiomatic for all members, and therefore all members should be voting for this legislation.

Essentially, the government that has used taxpayer dollars to stimulate this industry should be in there supporting this industry on a continuing basis with its automotive needs. So draw your own conclusions. To me, it makes sense. We have the Ontario government needing to buy, to rent, to lease automobiles. We have Ontario manufacturers right here at home. So it's a no-brainer. This is two plus two equals four. If you buy only from Ontario or Canada, then they will be made in Ontario. That's a great phrase that you don't hear often enough any more—"made in Ontario"—isn't it? A healthy auto sector creates a variety of feeder businesses that are now in peril.

I don't know, but I think the government over there needs a lesson or two in how to bring business in. We need leadership by example. We need some salesmanship. We need an end to the blame game. They've been so used to waving goodbye to manufacturers, business, skilled workers, that they've forgotten how to attract employers to Ontario.

The NDP knows how to attract them. We've heard from my friend from Welland this afternoon. We in the PC caucus know how to attract them. Citizens know how to attract them. So how come Dalton McGuinty doesn't seem to know how to attract them? We need to ensure that at least 62% of manufacturing and assembly is taking place in Ontario.

Here is a short refresher. If it is made in Ontario, that means it stays in Ontario. People will be happy in Ontario. Businesses will remain in Ontario. They did not call this province the engine of Canada for nothing. Stay in Ontario, manufacturers. Government, help manufacturers stay in Ontario. Don't let them go to Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia or the United States. I think every riding in this province has experienced some of that drain. It means 62% more business. It means 62% more jobs. It means 62% more domestic vehicles. To the McGuinty government, however, that means having to give a damn about Ontario, which we all know is not the same as giving a damn about your own precious party, or blaming anyone or anything for our troubles.

Bill 92 will make certain that hybrid alternative fuel and other types of advanced technology vehicles are

taken into consideration first, and we can help develop it. Oh, and I just wanted to point out that this private member's bill is longer and more detailed than a government bill which is supposed to help internationally trained doctors. But I digress. How does that make sense? Well, it's quite simple. My colleague and good friend from Oshawa actually cares about the people of Ontario. It is another case where the McGuinty do-nothing Liberal government believes that if it just ignores everything then the bad stuff will go away. But guess what? It will not. The only thing that is going away right now is our good jobs.

This week, we saw another 500 autoworkers lose their jobs—Volvo in Goderich. It feels like every time we open a newspaper or turn on the news, there's another automotive plant closing down or cutting hundreds, sometimes thousands, of jobs. My colleague has been proactive in trying to help the auto industry, and the government is sitting back and not doing anything. You would think the government would realize that, in order for companies to stay, there needs to be a demand from consumers and help from the government in some form. Here's an idea: When there is a demand for something, business always flourishes. There are currently no electric hybrid vehicles manufactured in Ontario. We need to bring that business into Ontario, and this bill can help do that. There we have it. This will not only help keep jobs in Ontario and Canada, but it will also help the environment.

The Premier of Saskatchewan came to Toronto to recruit our skilled workers. Why? Because he could. Our workers are leaving Ontario because this do-nothing Liberal government won't get up off their rump and keep the jobs where they're supposed to be. Speaking of rump, don't let the door hit you on the backside on the way out of Ontario, because that is exactly what is going to happen, given the current state of affairs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I stand to support this bill and I stand to support the entire premise that the province of Ontario should be buying Canadian-made goods. We should be driving Canadian-made goods, we should be extolling the virtues of Canadian-made goods, and we should be providing jobs for workers and for communities to prosper.

One need only look at today's business section of the Toronto Star. There's a chilling headline in the business section: "Canada Braces as Auto Sales Crash." That's the statement. Mr. Speaker, not to use it as a prop but to actually read it, it states that sales in Canada actually increased in the month of September, but that's not what is causing problems for our workers. It goes on to say:

"But in the US, their losses were far worse.

"Ford's sales tumbled 34% last month; Chrysler's volumes fell 33%; Toyota's deliveries slid 32.3%; Honda's business dropped 24% and GM's sales were down 15.6%. All five automakers operate major assembly plants in Canada."

Then it quotes Mr. Lewenza, the new CAW chief of the union:

"When there are no customers and no production, substantial layoffs have to come...."

"Ken Lewenza, president of the Canadian Auto-workers Union, agreed the drop in US auto sales will undoubtedly trigger more layoffs here.

"You can't have this much of a decline in sales without more downtime coming and increased insecurity for everyone in the long term...."

The auto industry in this province is hurting. The auto industry in this province is reaching out to all of us, particularly people in this Legislature, to try to find a solution. I commend the member from Oshawa for seeking to find that solution. I commend the government in the past for attempting, wherever possible, to buy made-in-Ontario products. But surely, having a bill like this, which sets a minimum standard for what can be bought, doesn't stop us as Ontarians from buying even more Ontario-made goods. It sets a minimum standard for this government and for future governments.

I looked at the bill and I looked at what it was going to do. It advocates a number of really important things: that we look at alternative fuel cars as part of the bill, that we look at cars that use smaller motors and therefore use less energy as part of this bill. It looks at alternative-source-of-energy cars, it looks at the size of the cars and recommends that we use subcompacts, compacts and mid-sized cars, save and except where a large car is needed. And I do understand that, from time to time, larger cars will be needed in certain circumstances, where a lot of people or goods are ferried around and one needs a larger car. But wherever possible, it says that what we should be doing is setting an example, and I believe the province has that responsibility. I certainly know that the workers in Windsor, in Welland, in Oshawa, in Oakville, where Ford is manufactured, in St. Thomas and in all of the other places in Ontario are looking for leadership from this government. I certainly know that when I have been out there, as I am doing these days as part of the leadership tour—I was in Oshawa. I was with Mike Shields. I went from door to door with him for a little while, and I want to tell you the number one issue in Oshawa is what is happening to General Motors. That should not be of any surprise. What is happening to the economy? How do we keep the jobs in our community? How can we help? And I think that this bill will help. It will certainly provide no hindrance.

1550

Although I understand that the Liberals are proud of their record in the last couple of years and the number of purchases of cars and leases they have made that were Canadian made, we need to set a minimum standard. This minimum standard that is set here is a good one. Sixty-two percent is a good one, and it is one that we will ask, when we pass it, that other companies, other authorities and other municipalities also do. I think if we do that we are doing the right thing. I commend the member from Oshawa.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm very happy to speak to Bill 92 by the member from Oshawa. I just need to start by commenting that no party, no government has done more to support the auto sector in Ontario than the McGuinty government. Our auto investment strategy has attracted over \$7 billion in investment in the auto sector in Ontario. In fact, I'm actually pleased to note that when you look at Bill 92 and you look at our actual government procurement policy—because that's what we are talking about here today, specifically, the government's procurement policy for its own fleet—it's actually almost the same as the bill that is being proposed. So what's already happening is better, actually, than the bill.

For example, we are looking at when we should have fuel-efficient cars, alternative fuel and hybrid models. There is an exemption to our buy-Ontario policy, not because we want to buy someplace else but simply that in many of those cases the manufacturers have chosen not to build those lines in Canada, in Ontario. When you want to get some of those hybrid models, you do need to go offshore. But that same clause is in Bill 92.

When you look at exemptions around compacts and subcompacts and that sort of thing—same language, essentially, in our policy, which is, for those vehicles which are going to be used for passenger vehicles, go with the smaller vehicles. Go with Ontario-manufactured smaller vehicles. But where you have a legitimate need for larger vehicles, for example, the over 2,000 cruisers in the Ontario Provincial Police fleet, you go with a larger model. Those are all things that are already covered in our policy, and it has been a huge success because we do have a buy-Ontario policy.

If you look at what we are already doing, we've purchased over 500 vehicles in April and May of this year alone from Ontario-based production facilities. We have contracts with a number of Ontario manufacturers, including Ford and Chrysler, to add 1,500 new vehicles each year to Ontario's fleet, manufactured in Ontario. For this model year, for 2008, 71.5% of the vehicles purchased are manufactured in Ontario. In fact, if we look at the green side, why isn't that 100%? Because we're also conscious of the green side. We actually have a green fleet strategy. Where we are aiming for by 2011-12 is 10% reduction in fuel consumption, an increase in hybrid vehicles, a number of things. As of April of this year, the OPS fleet already has 385 hybrid vehicles with another 26 on order. So I would suggest that we have an excellent record.

But there is something that I really do like about this bill, because I come from an auto parts town. When we look at a lot of the stuff about buy-Ontario and buy-Canada, we're looking at where things are assembled. If you're like me, and you come from an auto parts town, jobs in my community are sometimes used to produce vehicles that are assembled in other countries.

For example, Linamar in my town often has contracts that take its engines, its drive trains, into the Detroit,

Michigan, market. There is a lot of assembling that is supplied from Guelph into the Michigan market by Linamar. When I look at another one of my parts manufacturers, Denso, which specializes in extruded plastics components, they're actually, as we speak, with the help of the Ontario auto investment fund, doubling the size of their plant in Guelph. They're doing that because they are choosing to introduce a new part into the North American market that they used to produce in Japan. The only place that they are going to be producing these air conditioning housings is in Guelph. If anybody buys that part from Denso, it will be supplied from Guelph. So I am really pleased to see that the member from Oshawa is including in his bill looking not just at the place of assembly but also the place of manufacture.

If this bill is passed, I think it's going to require some work at committee. How we figure out that more sophisticated content needs some work. I think that the whole idea of short-term leases is problematic. I once landed on a flight from Timmins, an emergency landing in Kirkland Lake. When I rented a car, I didn't care where it was manufactured—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: But I am interested in this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: This is indeed an Ontario day in private members' business, with pick-your-own signs and buy-Ontario in our automotive industries. It is interesting, the 100th anniversary of the McLaughlin-Buick. It is a wonderful celebration. I hope Oshawa is celebrating that in some prestigious system.

I understand that Colonel McLaughlin was a man of sterling character, a tremendous individual, and his cars represented his character. His cars were extremely well built. His character was also extremely well built. His family continues to be in Ontario. In fact, his grandson is the dean of agriculture at the University of Guelph, and he's been at the University of Guelph for at least 30 years; I think I've known him for 30 years. Dean McLaughlin has done a great deal of good for Ontario agriculture in his role as dean and, prior to that, as a professor at the University of Guelph.

The auto industry is Ontario's number one industry, and it's well and good that we should be supporting the purchase of Ontario vehicles with Ontario taxpayer dollars. One has to be very careful when we do this because NAFTA, the North American free trade agreement, has certain criteria in it that you cannot promote something from your home jurisdiction to the discredit or to the disadvantage of vehicles that are manufactured in some other jurisdiction within the North American free trade area. I believe that the member for Oshawa has brought in a bill that protects Ontario's standing in NAFTA and that this bill is NAFTA-proof and would do well to serve the people of Ontario.

Keeping in mind the member for Oshawa is from Oshawa, and he's a son of Oshawa, when he says we

should buy-Ontario in the vehicle business, there's an unwritten message in there. In fact, if you hold the bill up to the light just right it says "GM." "You should really be buying GM, out of Oshawa," that's what the bill really says.

1600

Of course, Jerry and I have very similar ridings. He's on the east of Toronto; I'm on the west of Toronto. He has some agriculture in his community; I have some agriculture in my community. He has an automobile plant in his riding; I have an automobile plant in my riding. I tend to be coming from Ford country; he comes from GM country. So it's very similar. That invisible ink says "GM" east of Toronto; it says "Ford" west of Toronto.

I heard the member from Welland talking about the gas mileage from other cars. I was the proud owner of a 1997 Mercury Grand Marquis for many years. I put nearly 300,000 clicks on the car, and even at the end that car was getting 28 miles to the gallon. It was an extremely good car. It served me well for many, many years and still got 28 miles to the gallon. It was an amazing mileage for a car of that vintage.

Buying Ontario is something that is extremely important for all Ontarians to be aware of, whether it's buying automobiles or buying food products that are grown in Ontario. The safety of our foods and, indeed, the safety of our automobiles is becoming more and more important. The way they're built and the way they're grown is very important to the people of Ontario, from a safety perspective and from a quality perspective. So I would encourage Ontarians, no matter what they are looking at, to have concern for buying locally. I think it's good business.

This bill, again, is good for Ontario. I think it's important that people understand that buying Ontario—particularly at this time, when the economy of Ontario is in very, very serious trouble. We are standing on the brink. We are sitting on a teeter-totter. In the United States, the rescue package went through the Senate last night. It's being discussed by the House of Representatives and American Congress today and tomorrow. They think they may vote on it Saturday. But even with the passing of that package last night by the Senate, which I would think would be good news, markets are in serious doo-doo this morning and this afternoon. I understand that the TSX is down some 700 points today, in record territory. I think that is only a small indication—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The member for Oshawa, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I want to thank the members from Welland, Mississauga South, Thornhill, Beaches—East York, Guelph and Halton for their comments today.

Is the bill perfect? Of course not. But it's a start. It's leading by example. I know in my family, I drive GM, my wife drives GM, my mom drives GM, my dad drives GM, my aunt drives GM, and the list goes on.

I have to tell you, it's not just a matter of vehicles; it's leading by example in so many other areas. For example, I had to buy my son new hockey pants. He wanted one

particular brand. I'll even name the brand; it was Fury. I said, "No, we're not buying Fury." He said, "Why?" I said, "Come here and I'll show you." I showed him and I said, "See? It's made in China. You're buying Tackla pants." He said, "Well, why, Dad?" and I said, "Look, it doesn't say 'Made in Ontario,' it doesn't say 'Made in Canada'; it says 'Made in Pickering.'" You have to lead by example. If you show your kids now the reason and the impact and explain the difference to them, maybe it'll make their future a little bit better.

A friend of mine stated once before that if you're willing to accept a product based on a \$2 or \$3-an-hour wage production component, then maybe you should be willing to accept a \$2 or \$3-an-hour wage, as well. That's one of the difficulties in Ontario: We would like to have it all without compensating or making any differences.

We have to lead by example. One of the areas that was mentioned by the member from Mississauga was talking about the hybrids and the availability. If they want to increase the fleet, General Motors in Oshawa and the other Big Three in Ontario produce—every vehicle coming out is E85 friendly, can run on 85% ethanol, but there are only four gas stations in the province of Ontario that will supply it. There's the difficulty.

Lead by example, establish some criteria by which we can bring in the independent or non-major oil companies and bring some competition in there. Lord knows we need some competition in the auto sector. It'll go a long way in making sure that we have environmentally friendly vehicles in the province of Ontario, produced and purchased by the taxpayers in the province of Ontario.

I hope it goes to committee and I look forward to it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The time provided for private members' business has expired.

We'll first deal with ballot item number 37, standing in the name of Mr. Hardeman.

SIGNAGE TO PROMOTE ONTARIO GROWN AGRICULTURAL FOOD PRODUCTS ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR L'AFFICHAGE VISANT À PROMOUVOIR LES PRODUITS AGROALIMENTAIRES CULTIVÉS EN ONTARIO

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Hardeman has moved second reading of Bill 98. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 97, the bill is referred to—Mr. Hardeman?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: The Standing Committee on Justice Policy, please, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Agreed? Agreed.

We shall now deal with ballot item number 38, standing in the name of Mr. Kormos.

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Kormos has moved private members' notice of motion number 51. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We will call in the members for a vote on this after dealing with the next ballot item.

We shall now deal with ballot item number 39, standing in the name of Mr. Ouellette.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1607 to 1612.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All those in support, please stand until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Bisson, Gilles
Chudleigh, Ted
Hardeman, Ernie

Kormos, Peter
Marchese, Rosario
Ouellette, Jerry J.

Prue, Michael
Shurman, Peter

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All those opposed, please stand until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Brotten, Laurel C.
Colle, Mike
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
Dombrowsky, Leona

Fonseca, Peter
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kular, Kuldip
Leal, Jeff
Mangat, Amrit
McNeely, Phil
Moridi, Reza
Naqvi, Yasir
Phillips, Gerry

Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Sousa, Charles
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John
Wynne, Kathleen O.

MINISTRY OF GOVERNMENT
SERVICES AMENDMENT ACT
(CANADIAN MANUFACTURING
AND ASSEMBLY
OF GOVERNMENT VEHICLES), 2008
LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LE MINISTÈRE
DES SERVICES GOUVERNEMENTAUX
(FABRICATION ET MONTAGE
DE VÉHICULES GOUVERNEMENTAUX
AU CANADA)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Ouellette has moved second reading Bill 92. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Agreed? Agreed.

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We shall now deal with ballot item number 38.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are eight; the nays are 28.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Orders of the day? Chair of cabinet.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Phillips has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House is adjourned until 9 of the clock Monday morning, October 6.

The House adjourned at 1614.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Broten, Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
		Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
		Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture
		Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
		Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
		Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
		Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby—Oshawa	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora—Rainy River	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham—Kent—Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West—Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest—Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges—Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton—Springdale	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea—Gore—Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean—Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga—Brampton South / Mississauga—Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity—Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough— Westdale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa—Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (LIB)	Huron—Bruce	
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York—Simcoe	
Murdoch, Bill (IND)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough—Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres
		Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches—East York	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of International Trade and Investment / Ministre du Commerce international et de l'Investissement
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London—Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland—Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds—Grenville	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme
		Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre
		Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton—Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga—Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services / Ministre des Petites Entreprises et des Services aux consommateurs
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth—Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener—Waterloo	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
		Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Yakubski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Tim Hudak, Amrit Mangat
Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
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Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

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la justice**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Jeff Leal
Reza Moridi, Yasir Naqvi
Lou Rinaldi, John Yakabuski
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

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permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jerry J. Ouellette
Laura Albanese, Ernie Hardeman
Andrea Horwath, Phil McNeely
Jerry J. Ouellette, Liz Sandals
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
Bas Balkissoon, Mike Colle
Kim Craiton, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Tony Ruprecht
Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

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la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Laurel C. Broten, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Helena Jaczek
Dave Levac, Shafiq Qaadri
Khalil Ramal, Laurie Scott
Peter Shurman
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Select Committee on Elections / Comité spécial des élections

Chair / Président: Greg Sorbara
Howard Hampton, Greg Sorbara
Norman W. Sterling, David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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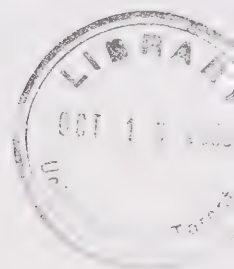
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Monday 6 October 2008

Lundi 6 octobre 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 6 October 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 6 octobre 2008

The House met at 0900.

Prayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence.

The House observed a moment's silence.

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order: Just for some guidance and assistance, was that the atheist moment of silence or are they going to be accommodated in yet another way?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): In speaking to that point of order, the prayers that were submitted were the ones that were submitted by the prayer committee, and any additional prayers that you may wish to be considered in this chamber, I ask all members and anyone watching to forward them to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly. It is the standing committee's responsibility to make any further recommendations on prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INCREASING ACCESS TO QUALIFIED HEALTH PROFESSIONALS FOR ONTARIANS ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 VISANT À ACCROÎTRE L'ACCÈS DES ONTARIENNES ET DES ONTARIENS AUX PROFESSIONNELS DE LA SANTÉ QUALIFIÉS

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 30, 2008, on the motion of second reading of Bill 97, An Act to increase access to qualified health professionals for all Ontarians by amending the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 / Projet de loi 97, Loi visant à accroître l'accès des Ontariennes et des Ontariens aux professionnels de la santé qualifiés en modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Caplan has moved second reading of Bill 97. Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Should the bill be ordered for third reading?

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Orders of the day? Government House leader.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I seek consent for the House to recess until question period at 10:45.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

The House recessed from 0905 to 1045.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have some guests we'd like to introduce today. On behalf of page Supriya Sethi: her mother, Minakshi Sethi, and her father, Satish Sethi, in the west members' gallery. As well, on behalf of page Imaan Javeed: her mother, Shehna Javeed, and her grandmother Zarina Jabbar, and they're going to be seated in the public gallery today.

I apologize for being late. I was touring with two guests from my riding, Dianne and Amy Nickson, and they will soon be sitting in the Speaker's gallery.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Last December, you told this House that you estimated that your risky gamble into asset-based commercial paper would cost Ontario taxpayers less than \$100 million, and you were more than a little cavalier in terms of that kind of money when you made that reference. Minister, through the public accounts, we're now told the hit on taxpayers is \$125 million, and that's before the latest turmoil in the US financial markets. Can you give us an updated estimate of your gambling losses in asset-backed commercial paper?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The public accounts indicate that there is a writedown of, I believe, about \$107 million. We expect to recover all of that. That's an accounting reality. We still own the paper. Much of it has value. We expect probably about \$30 million of that, sir, to eventually be written off. It did slightly exceed the \$100 million that I had projected late last year, and there will be a loss somewhere probably around \$30 million over time, but much of that will be recovered. Governments in Ontario over the last 15 years have invested in asset-backed commercial paper, as did many other institutional investors, and we believe that in the public accounts, we reflect properly the accounting treatment of that asset-backed commercial paper.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Well, the minister keeps repeating, when we reference this issue, that former governments made these kind of investments, but the reality is that it's only under your government that such high-risk investments were authorized.

Minister, you should know you have a duty, a trust with Ontario taxpayers, to invest their money in safe, secure investments. Instead, someone in your government was allowed to put hard-working Ontarians' money into dangerous investments, and that taxpayers' money is gone. A loss is a loss no matter how you try to frame it. People are losing their jobs and their pension savings; communities are suffering, and you roll the dice with taxpayers' money. Someone in your government should be accountable to the people of this province for losing their money. Will you hold those individuals responsible?

1050

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I want to assure the people of Ontario that in fact this money is not gone. What we did was indicated in the public accounts and took an accounting writedown, which was approved by the Auditor General after being reviewed by two external firms. The assets are still there. It is the expectation that virtually all of that will be recovered over time. It represented a very, very small portion of Ontario's cash holdings that were invested in this particular asset. I should remind the member that successive governments have invested in asset-backed commercial paper. While that writedown is real, it is appropriate, and I believe taxpayers can be assured that they will recover a substantial portion of it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: These high-risk investments were enabled by a regulation passed by this Liberal government, and he tries to suggest that other governments were engaged in this. That's simply not accurate. When we talk about this issue, I understand that people's eyes glaze over, but the reality here, what really matters, is that this government not only participated in but facilitated the use of taxpayer dollars in very risky investments. They rolled the dice with taxpayers' money. This wasn't Mr. McGuinty's money or Mr. Sorbara's or Mr. Duncan's; it was hard-working Ontarians' money, and its use and loss deserves straight answers from this government.

Minister, will you call in the Auditor General to determine what happened, who was responsible, and how we ensure it doesn't happen again?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I remind the member opposite that the Auditor General has been involved in every aspect. In fact, he correctly points out that it was in public accounts where the writedown was. I'd also remind him that Mr. Purdy Crawford, who I think deserves the gratitude of all Canadians, has put together the compromise proposed on asset-based commercial paper. Mr. Crawford has said the province of Ontario—who hold their restructured paper to maturity can expect to get most of their investment back over time.

While this contagion has affected that particular aspect of the portfolio, we will continue to invest our other funds. I remind the member that the return on our funds has been much higher than in previous years.

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to follow up on my colleague's questioning, but I want to direct my question to the Premier. The Minister of Finance has sidestepped my colleague's questions. He goes out of his way to assure the taxpayer that this money is not gone.

I would like to ask the Premier this question: Why does he feel that it's important for his government to justify the actions of the Ontario Financing Authority, which clearly gambled with \$700 million of taxpayers' dollars? Whether \$100 million are lost or \$200 million or lost is not the issue. The issue for the Premier should be, is his Minister of Finance holding the Ontario Financing Authority accountable for questionable investments that they made, and if not, why not?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Ontario Financing Authority is composed of a board of very experienced individuals who offer advice to the government. We also rely on the advice of the Auditor General as well as outside auditors. Like the Caisse de dépôt, like the Alberta Treasury Branches, like CP, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. and a range of others, a very small percentage of our cash holdings was invested in asset-backed commercial paper. That has been the situation now over a number of years. We have written down a little over \$100 million—\$107 million—in this year's public accounts, with the expectation that the vast majority of that money will be recovered. I should remind the member opposite that the Auditor General has signed off on those public accounts.

Mr. Frank Klees: Here is what the Financial Administration Act tells the Ontario Financing Authority is their responsibility: that investments are limited to those that are "advisable for the sound and efficient management of public money."

I ask the Premier one more time: Why does he feel that he or his finance minister must defend the Ontario Financing Authority for not doing its job rather than calling it to account for not doing what it is intended to do? Because all of that money that the finance minister tells us is recoverable is now not available to pay for drugs, to pay for long-term-care facilities for seniors, to pay for cancer care drugs—all of those public services that that money was to be providing. Why does the Premier feel that this authority needs defending?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again, the asset-backed commercial paper component of our portfolio was very small relative to the overall amount. In fact, we actually had better returns over the last three years than we had certainly over the previous number of years.

A number of policy adjustments have been made at the Ontario Financing Authority, and I remind the mem-

bers opposite that this challenge has really hit most of the western world. It affected some of our largest financial institutions, including the Ontario Financing Authority—this challenge that was experienced throughout markets. A number of recommendations have been seen to, for instance, the credit agencies and how they make recommendations. We've changed our policies to reflect processes that have been adopted elsewhere. Clear guarantees from banks and others have put this together.

None of us is happy about this situation. However, in my view, I don't agree with the member; I believe the Ontario Financing Authority has acted prudently in—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: So we hear from our finance minister that it was prudent, on behalf of the Ontario Financing Authority, to have gambled \$700 million in risky investments on behalf of the Ontario taxpayer. He stands in his place, and the Premier chooses not to intervene, to say, "No, I disagree with my finance minister. It's not prudent. They did not act according to the prescribed legislation that calls on them to make prudent investment on behalf of taxpayers."

Every single dollar that is lost is not a technical write-down; it means that cancer drugs can't be paid for, it means long-term-care facilities can't be provided, and it means social services can't be provided to people in this province through the tax dollars that they paid into this government. I call on the Premier to hold his minister and the Ontario Financing Authority accountable for their reckless actions.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It's important to keep the context of every response in its true form. First of all, organizations as diverse as the Caisse de dépôt, Alberta treasury branches, CP Rail and others also suffered from this particular situation. What I said to the member was the response of the OFA, once the challenge was there, was prudent, was responsible in the circumstances and in the face of all knowledge.

Ontario taxpayers can be assured that the cash holdings of the province are appropriately invested, are earning a good return and in fact, given the strength of those returns over the last year, are enabling us to invest more in health care, invest more in education, and to repair the damage that that member and his government did to our health and education sectors over the eight years that they were in office.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Premier. The Premier has received two responses from federal leaders on his so-called fairness questionnaire. I assume the Premier has read the two responses. Can he tell us which response, Mr. Dion's or Mr. Layton's, delivers fairness for Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think I can tell where the leader of the NDP is coming from on this, and I think I

know which response he favours. I think I know which one he would have favoured before he even received it.

The point of this exercise, though, is to bring to the people of Ontario's attention that there is a fundamental issue of fairness between our province and Ottawa. We're asking Ontarians to visit our website, www.fairness.ca, take a look at those responses that have now been posted and to take that information into consideration when it comes time to cast their ballots. Unlike my friend opposite, I'm not telling Ontarians how to vote. What I am asking them to do is to take into consideration this issue of fairness, to make sure they put these kinds of issues to their candidates when they come to the door, and to that end we've put in place a website. Please visit that website and take that posted information into account.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I'm simply asking the Premier some questions about his own campaign. It seems to me one of the issues that is troubling all Ontarians is the huge loss of jobs. Whether it is Goderich, Welland, Oshawa, Thunder Bay, Brantford, London or Windsor, a huge loss of jobs; hundreds of thousands of people who've worked hard all their lives are out of work. In your letter, you ask for employment insurance fairness. I read Stéphane Dion's response. The changes he proposes to make to employment insurance would actually make it worse for Ontario workers.

Premier, are you going to stand up for laid-off Ontario workers, since Stéphane Dion doesn't think it's important to stand up for laid-off Ontario workers?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: That's what we did as a Legislature through our just-passed resolution, passed unanimously in this House. Together we stood up for Ontario workers. Together we said to Ottawa, "It's unfair to give our unemployed workers \$4,600 less in employment insurance benefits than they would receive were they Canadians in any other province." Together we said, "That is unfair." That's what I call standing up together for Ontario workers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Premier, here is the reality: Only one in five Ontario workers who is laid off today is in fact eligible for employment insurance—one in five. Four fifths of them, even though they've paid into employment insurance, cannot collect an employment insurance benefit. Maybe you think it's good enough simply to pass a resolution. I'm asking you, what are you going to do? Are you going to get on the phone to Stéphane Dion and tell him it is unacceptable, that the changes he proposes to employment insurance would actually make it worse for Ontario workers—not better but worse for Ontario workers—who have lost their jobs? Are you going to get on the phone and tell him he's wrong?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I just don't understand how the leader of the NDP can take such direct orders from the federal leader of the NDP and put these kinds of

questions to us in the House. I think we have a higher responsibility. That responsibility is to speak to all Ontarians, to help them understand the consequences of the unfairness that is being visited upon all Ontario families. It extends beyond employment insurance. It also affects our health care. We're coming up nearly \$800 million short. We'd receive \$800 million more were we treated the same way as Canadians living in other provinces. We'd get about \$1 billion more for our infrastructure were we treated the same as Canadians living in other provinces. Here in southern Ontario, we're the only region in Canada that does not benefit from a regional economic development program, yet this is where 10 million Canadians live. It's the heartland of our manufacturing sector. Again, our shared responsibility, as I see it, is to continue to speak to Ontarians and educate them on the issue of fairness.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Howard Hampton: To the Premier again: I want to read his own words to him. "Ontario's economy is facing challenges, which means some workers, particularly in the manufacturing sector, have been laid off." And you then go into several sentences talking about the unfairness of the employment insurance system to laid-off Ontario workers. Now you're confronted with Stéphane Dion's position, which would actually make it worse for laid-off Ontario workers. Laid-off Ontario workers would get less under the changes that Stéphane Dion proposes to make to employment insurance. Was the Premier not sincere when he wrote these words? Does it mean that you advocate on Monday for unemployed Ontario workers, but by Thursday they don't matter?

I'm going to ask the Premier again: Stéphane Dion proposes to hurt laid-off Ontario workers even more than they've been hurt already. Are you going to get on the phone and tell Stéphane Dion that he's wrong, that it's wrong to hurt Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the leader of the NDP's particularly partisan perspective on this issue. But again, I believe that our shared responsibility is to collect information from all federal parties, to post that information and make it public so that all Ontarians can get hold of it, and then to ask Ontarians to take that information into account when they vote. I understand that the leader of the NDP has his own very partisan perspective on this. I understand that and I accept that. But I think together we owe more to Ontarians.

We did that just recently through a resolution we passed in this House unanimously, asking all federal parties to put forward their position. Those positions are now posted at www.fairness.ca

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: Premier, I'm not asking that you come out and endorse Jack Layton or something. I'm

simply testing your own sincerity. You said in your letter that the plight of laid-off Ontario workers was important. You said that the employment insurance system was unfair to laid-off Ontario workers. Now one of the federal platforms, that of Stéphane Dion, the Liberal leader, proposes to do even more damage to laid-off Ontario workers.

I'm testing the Premier's own sincerity. Is the Premier going to get on the phone and tell Stéphane Dion that he is wrong, that the changes that he proposes to make to employment insurance are going to hurt Ontario workers more than ever? It is a test of the Premier's own sincerity. Are you going to live up to your own fairness campaign and tell Stéphane Dion that it's wrong for federal—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I hope I can count on the leader of the NDP's energy, enthusiasm and general ebullience on this issue when we have to deal with the next federal government, of whatever political stripe that might be.

But there is an important issue here. The fact is that if you lose your job in Ontario, the first problem you face is that you are not qualifying as easily as you would if you were living in another province, and even when you do qualify, you get \$4,600 less than you would as a Canadian living in another province. That \$4,600, if you've lost your job, isn't for the purposes of investing in RRSPs or in some condo. It's about groceries, it's about rent money, and it's about clothing for the children. That's what that money is all about. That's why we need to stand together and to impress upon Ontarians how important it is for all of them to speak out on this issue, particularly in the context of this federal campaign.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Howard Hampton: My test is that of testing Dalton McGuinty's sincerity. Is he going to get on the phone to Stéphane Dion and speak out?

Here are your words, Premier: "Under the current EI program, unemployed Ontario workers get an average of \$4,630 less in EI support than workers living in other parts of Canada"—\$4,630 less. The changes that Stéphane Dion proposes in the Liberal platform would actually make it even worse than that. So I think all Ontarians should speak out on this issue, but I'm asking the Premier, are you now going to speak out? Are you going to get on the phone? Are you going to call Stéphane Dion and tell him it's wrong to hurt laid-off Ontario workers by making the employment insurance system even tougher for them?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I certainly agree with the leader of the NDP when it comes to us coming together and doing what we can to impress upon Ontarians the need for us to speak out in the context of the federal campaign.

It's not just the issue of employment insurance, though. As I said a moment ago, it also affects our health

care. We are getting nearly \$800 million less than we should, and than we would were we Canadians living in other provinces. That \$800 million, by the way, would allow us to hire over 10,000 more nurses. It would enable us to pick up about 250 MRIs. Those human resources and that kind of medical technology would enable us to drive wait times down even further. There's a real consequence to our health care, to our workers who have lost their jobs, and to the quality of our roads and bridges and the like. That's why it's important for us to continue to stick together and press our case with all federal parties.

1110

YOUTH CRIME

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is for the Premier. Today's Ottawa Citizen has a story by Lee Greenberg, and I'm quoting from it: "Ontario's Liberal government, which rode into office pledging unprecedented transparency, refused this week to say how much a former Liberal MPP is being paid to lead an over-budget and overdue review into youth violence."

Premier, does Mr. Greenberg have it right? Are you refusing to let the public know how you're spending their money?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As the member opposite knows, the information that was sought is in the public accounts, available for all to see. It is available. I was not prepared to give the information without the permission of the people involved, but it was in fact in the public accounts and is publicly available.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Based on that response, a couple of things: We have to wonder why the minister has to take direction from some mysterious office—we suspect it's the Premier's office—but the other point I'd like to draw from her response was her apparent willingness to make this information public. I think we should have details—the public should have details—on why this budget has ballooned from an expected \$1 million to, we're now told, roughly \$2 million and growing. Why has the report not been released, why has it been delayed, what is the process and just how much time have Mr. Curling and Mr. McMurtry spent on this over the past year and counting?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The safety and well-being of our youth is a top priority for this government. That is why the Premier appointed two very, very capable people to look hard and come up with ideas on how we address crime that affects all of us.

I want to say thank you to the co-chairs, who really have embraced this quest with enormous enthusiasm. They will be releasing their report later this fall; we very much look forward to seeing their recommendations. I think it's important to get this right; this is foundational work. There is no simple solution, but I am confident that

the co-chairs will give us some very good advice in the coming weeks.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. In the 2003 commitment to medicare act, this government vowed to "support the prohibition of two-tier medicine, extra billing and user fees...." However, a report released today by the Ontario Health Coalition shows that the number of violations of the Canada Health Act is skyrocketing across Canada and in this province.

Will the minister agree to investigate the suspected violations documented in the report? Why is this government allowing those violations in the first place, and why does it not have a system to effectively monitor and prevent them?

Hon. David Caplan: I'm pleased to receive the report; I think it was released about an hour ago. Of course, the ministry takes very seriously the future of the commitment to medicare act, passed in 2003, as the member mentioned.

Interjection.

Hon. David Caplan: I hear the member from Kenora. In fact, he opposed it. I look at other members of their caucus: The member from Trinity–Spadina also opposed it; the member from Timmins–James Bay also opposed it. So while the member from Nickel Belt stands in her place and says, "This is the way the government should be operating, this is the kind of commitment that a government should have," she and her colleagues clearly do not.

In fact, the commitment this government showed, upon taking office in 2003—and that the Ontario Health Coalition acknowledged too at the news conference held today—it was this government that took seven private MRI clinics right across the province and brought them back into the public system. Because of the work and the strong commitment of this Premier and this government, that kind of work is taking—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Although I did say that there was an act, what I said is that in the act you said you would not tolerate extra billing, block fees, but there are 49 violations happening right here in Ontario, and I'd like to know if you're going to do something about it.

The spread of private for-profit clinics across Ontario is threatening equal access to quality care. One in seven ophthalmologists works in private for-profit clinics. Private, for-profit clinics not only draw scarce resources away from the public system, they charge exorbitant user fees and promote queue jumping. Yet, according to the Ontario Health Coalition report, Ontario has no adequate regulation and enforcement to stop the block fees and the extra billing. When will this government put a stop to the growing number of private for-profit laser eye clinics,

surgical clinics, boutique physician clinics, that are in clear violation of the Canada Health Act?

Hon. David Caplan: Clearly, I've outlined how the member and her party opposed the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, so it's a little hard for her to come into this House and say that somehow this is now something that they support, when clearly they have opposed it.

The way that this government is approaching this is to make our public health care system even stronger by having shorter wait times for key procedures. In fact, if you go to our public website, you'll find angiography down 50%, angioplasty down 46%, cataract surgeries down 61%, hip replacements down 51%, knee replacements down 47%, CT scans down 46%, cancer surgeries down 17%, MRIs down 24%, bypass surgeries down 28%. That's because this government has a commitment to a publicly funded, publicly delivered health care system, unlike, obviously—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. New question.

RURAL ONTARIO

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Our economy here in Ontario has been facing challenges and there are many circumstances taking place that are challenging our economy that are beyond our control, such as the high cost of oil, the weakened US economy, and high transportation and fuel costs, to name a few.

Our government has a plan, and it's a five-point plan, and it's the right plan to meet these challenges. We are investing in skilled trades for our workforce, and we are building infrastructure, creating jobs in the short term, and making Ontario more competitive in the long term. We are boosting innovation, cutting taxes and partnering with businesses.

Many Ontarians have lost their jobs recently and many of those jobs have been in rural Ontario communities, including communities in my riding. I would like to know what the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is doing to support the economy in rural Ontario.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I think it's important that folks in rural Ontario understand the commitment that the McGuinty government has to support their communities. That is why we have the rural economic development program. This is a program where our government partners with businesses to help remove the barriers that there may be for community development. We are partnering with businesses in the province. Since October 2003, 185 projects have been approved, with provincial investments of some \$60.3 million. That would have generated \$566 million of investments in rural communities right across Ontario. Those investments also brought jobs to those communities, and that is why our government has committed to double the money that we

will direct toward rural economic development, and that will be an increase over four years of—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Supporting rural communities is vital to the strength of the overall Ontario economy. I'm very pleased that our government has provided over \$1.7 million to my riding since 2003, through the rural economic development program, to partner with local businesses and create jobs in the communities.

One example of the benefits of the RED program: We have provided \$500,000 to the Regional Equine and Agricultural Centre of Huron to provide state-of-the-art facilities for education and recreational purposes and provide support for the agricultural and equine businesses. That is a huge economic driver in the community of central Huron and surrounding area.

I know that the rural economic development program is not the only program under the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs that is supporting economic growth in rural Ontario. Minister, what else is your ministry doing to sustain and create new jobs in rural Ontario?

1120

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I am very happy to identify some of the other investments we are making to help economic development in rural communities. We have a commitment to expand broadband Internet access in rural communities. That is what businesses—

Interjections.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I know members of the opposition are mocking that investment, but clearly they haven't been listening to what their constituents are telling them. We have been, and that is why we have committed \$30 million over the next four years to expand access to rural broadband, and that's on top of the \$10-million investment we made in 2007.

I would also like to talk about the fact that our Premier has sponsored a \$2.5-million program to recognize innovation on farms in the province of Ontario. This has been a very welcome program. Farmers are very happy that their innovations are being promoted and they are actually receiving as much as \$100,000 with the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. New question.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier. Last week, the Prime Minister proposed a plan to provide a \$2,000 completion bonus to apprentices who finish an apprenticeship program in a nationally recognized skilled trade. In Ontario it's going to be next to impossible for most apprentices to qualify for that bonus, because you have this crazy idea that it's somehow good policy to deny positions to young people through your artificially high apprentice-to-journeyman ratios.

Premier, it's clear that Ontarians will have to apprentice in other provinces in order to qualify for the \$2,000

bonus. Is this what you meant last week when you said you would not discourage Ontarians from looking for work elsewhere?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. John Milloy: Again, I'm always pleased by the interest shown in skilled trades by the opposition, but I think we should get some facts straight here. We are the first government to make apprenticeships a priority. Under our watch, there are 50,000 more apprentices learning trades than there were when we took office, which I think is an extraordinary figure, compared to the record of the Conservatives in power.

The member opposite has asked many questions in this House about ratios, and often talks about the 3-to-1 electrical ratio. I would like to point out that when it comes to electrical contractors, smaller contractors—who represent the majority of electrical companies in this province—are governed by a 1-to-1 ratio.

The member is aware that we are committed to improving and reforming the apprenticeship system. Based on industry advice—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Well, Minister, your approach isn't working; obviously, it's not working. Thousands and thousands of young people want to fill apprentice positions, and the positions would be there if you would change the ratios. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce estimates that in Canada, 25,000 to 60,000 workers are currently required in the construction industry, and another 50,000 are going to be needed in the tooling and machining industry.

I say to the Premier: Why do you consistently drag down Ontario's young people? Why don't you put Ontario's economy first by lowering the ratios, filling the apprentice positions that would become available, and making sure that the \$2,000 bonus per young person stays right here in Ontario?

Hon. John Milloy: As I said, again, I'm very proud of our record. We have 50,000 more apprentices working, which makes their record when they were in power pale to insignificance.

We are committed to reforming and improving the apprenticeship system. Based on industry advice, we have changed eight ratios during our time in power. How many did the Conservatives change when they were in power? Absolutely none.

We commissioned a report by Mr. Tim Armstrong, a noted industry expert. Based on Mr. Armstrong's advice, we want to further strengthen and enhance the apprenticeship system by commissioning a college of trades, where we can get the best advice most effectively from all those involved in apprenticeships in the province of Ontario.

We will continue to have a system of excellence in this province—which, as I said, causes their record in power to pale to insignificance.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. Stats Canada reports that since July 2004, Ontario has lost 235,000 manufacturing jobs. This means workers who have lost their jobs are sliding from making ends meet into poverty. When will the Premier admit that his government's failure to protect good-paying manufacturing jobs in Ontario is resulting in rising poverty rates in Ontario's manufacturing communities?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Michael Bryant: We were just in your neck of the woods, I say to the member, as we made an announcement on Thursday that launched the Yves Landry Foundation project. That, in fact, is going to see support for manufacturing workers on the job so that as the technology improves in manufacturing companies and requires new and updated skills, the workers are going to be able to, on the job in small and medium-sized enterprises, undertake that skills training to make those innovative and highly competitive manufacturing companies that are making those investments improve productivity. We're making the investments so that the workers can be able, on the job, not only to advance their own skills but advance those very important companies that we very much want to continue to succeed in the province.

Mr. Paul Miller: That's an interesting answer, considering that over 50 large manufacturing companies left Hamilton in the last 15 years and not one has come. I don't know where they're going to work.

The government's numbers tell the tale. The Ministry of Community and Social Services' quarterly statistical report shows that the number of Ontario Works cases increased in June 2008 by over 7,000 cases; the number of Ontario Works recipients, including children, increased by 12,000. Ontario needs action now: a \$10.25 minimum wage, social assistance rates that cover basic needs and an adequate supply of affordable housing. When will this government listen to the voices of low-income people, act now and stop sentencing these families to a life of poverty?

Hon. Michael Bryant: Let me say, the question covers a number of different areas. I'm going to speak to the efforts by the government to make investments in the very region that the member speaks of—Hamilton—so as to try to, instead of talking down the economy in Hamilton, provide encouragement and, more importantly, investment in that region, so that in fact we can create more jobs. That's why, in August 2007, the government announced the \$6-million advanced manufacturing sector loan to Dofasco to support a \$60-million investment to upgrade its steel production process. That's why, in June of this year, Ontario made investments with the city of Hamilton to improve economic planning through a multi-year economic development strategy. The government has a role to play, yes, in terms of providing social assistance to all Ontarians. The government also has a role to

play, an active role that I know the member does not support, that in fact will make—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. New question.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I have a question for my friend and colleague the Minister of Northern Development and Mines regarding skills training in northern Ontario. As the members of this House are well aware, the 2008 provincial budget of the government released a five-point plan to strengthen the economy of Ontario. As part of that plan, the government made a commitment to invest in skills training. One area in which it is important to invest in skills training is through post-secondary education, as these investments will provide students with the resources they need to build careers and lives in northern Ontario, which strengthens the economy not only of the north but of the whole province. Since taking office, I know that the minister has made important investments in skills training in northern Ontario, and I'm keen to know what recent investment he has made in post-secondary skills in northern Ontario.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'm grateful for the question from the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, who is such a strong supporter and advocate for post-secondary skills upgrading. Certainly, our government's investment in post-secondary education skills training will undoubtedly have a positive impact on the people studying, working and living in northern Ontario. The McGuinty government understands full well that northern Ontario's six colleges and four universities all make a major economic and social contribution to the north. A good example of that is: On July 11, when Premier McGuinty was in northwestern Ontario, we announced an investment of \$9.5 million to upgrade equipment and provide new classroom space at Confederation College, an investment that will see students training for new careers as welders, miners and construction workers. That's great news; 300 more students available. Certainly, I'm also happy to report that since February 2006, the northern Ontario heritage fund has invested more than \$7.6 million in projects for advanced education and training, in co-operation—

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The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Minister, thank you for informing the House about the significant investments that the government has recently made toward Confederation College. I look forward to the investments this investment will bring to northwestern Ontario and indeed all of Ontario.

As you know, the Northern Ontario School of Medicine opened in 2005, with campuses at Lakehead and at Laurentian University. Having a medical school in northern Ontario is very important for a number of reasons, but one, of course, is that it will improve the health and well-being of northerners. It will also help people living

in remote areas across the vast northern regions of our province to provide better medical care closer to home.

I and my constituents are very interested to know what recent investments in skills training at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine have been made to improve access to health care in remote northern communities.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thanks again to the member. Obviously, we're very excited about the Northern Ontario School of Medicine. It's a tremendous accomplishment, the first new medical school to open in Ontario in 30 years.

Another great announcement was made this August, actually. Premier McGuinty was at the Thunder Bay campus of the medical school to announce that, through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp., we have provided \$3.3 million to expand local medical centres and improve Internet connections in 77 communities over the next three years across the north. These investments will allow medical students to train and see patients in small rural and aboriginal communities while staying in close contact with their teachers by using video conferencing and distance learning.

By training medical students in the north, we're helping to ensure that more doctors will work in the north. With these improvements, northern communities will benefit right away from the dedication and the expertise of these medical students. It's great news.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question. The member for Simcoe North.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate you helping to take credit for that school started by Mike Harris.

POLICE OFFICERS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Over six months ago, your government agreed to the terms and conditions and you signed on the dotted line of the federal government's 2,500 front-line police officers program. The money, \$156 million, is to be used over five years and will add another 1,000 police officers to Ontario's police services.

Minister, can you inform the House today how many officers will be added to First Nations policing, municipal police services, and OPP non-contract policing in this fiscal year, 2008-09, using a portion of the \$156 million in federal dollars?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I look forward to informing the House very shortly on the plan, but I'd like to inform the House and ask the House, especially the member, who is my critic, to stand up with Ontario and tell the federal government that their program, their promise to put 2,500 new officers on the street, is a failed program. There isn't a police association in Canada that agrees with that particular program. So I ask the member, as I ask the official opposition, to tell Stephen Harper to rethink his failed policy and to ensure that he funds

police officers not for five years but for the life of the police officer, which is 30 years, the same way we did right here in Ontario.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Clearly, you didn't answer the question. As you are aware, your government and Premier McGuinty agreed to the terms and conditions to see the \$156 million flow to you. The money is in the bank, effective April 1 of this year. In the meantime, there is a desperate need for additional resources in many areas of policing across Ontario. For example, using the OPPA staffing model, there's a shortage of 500 officers in the OPP alone.

Minister, if you could try to answer the question, how much of the \$156 million that you have now will you be using for additional police resources in this year, 2008-09? It's a very simple question; even you should be able to answer it.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: What I'm going to ask of the member is very, very simple as well, and even he should be able to work—the Canadian Police Association, the Ontario Provincial Police Association, the Ontario police association, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, and every province and territory at the latest justice ministers' meeting supported Ontario's resolution that we ask the federal government to live up to their commitment for 2,500 more police officers. What we're asking is that the Harper government stop being fluff on crime and start being tough on crime.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development—I'll have to go to the Premier, I guess. Oh, here he comes.

Ontario's economy is in serious trouble, and the time for excuses is over. Today, the Ontario Federation of Labour released a report in my community of Hamilton that reveals the true depth of the job crisis. The report documents the failure of the employment insurance system and the plunge in wages for Hamilton workers who have lost good manufacturing jobs and are now forced to work in the low-wage service sector.

When will the Premier and this government admit that their fairness for Ontario campaign has failed, and when will they take real action to protect and sustain jobs in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Michael Bryant: That report, as the member says, was released very recently—this morning. Obviously I look forward to reviewing it and certainly wish to work with the member, to the extent he is willing, on addressing recommendations that are in the report, particularly those that emphasize government intervention by way of assisting the advanced manufacturing sector, in addition to assisting those companies whose goal is to provide the next generation of jobs and in addition to the specific regional assistance that's being provided through Communities in Transition.

This government is engaging in that kind of intervention to try to retain, promote and grow those jobs and those clusters in the very region the member is speaking of.

Mr. Paul Miller: This is the first time I have addressed the minister in the House, and I'd like to congratulate him on his new job.

The loss of thousands of good-paying jobs in Hamilton in the last two years alone is truly staggering. A quarter of the manufacturing jobs in my area—a quarter—disappeared in 24 months. Companies that have been the foundation of our local economy are closing down and transferring jobs to Mexico, the US and Asia, and our provincial government stands by and does nothing.

When will the minister and this government stop blaming everybody else and take real action to protect Ontario jobs?

Hon. Michael Bryant: I appreciate the member's good wishes. To the question itself, I would just say that, on the contrary, this government has in fact been extremely active in not only reaching out to support Stelco, Dofasco and the city of Hamilton, to give a few examples, but, in addition, in making investments to support those companies that are engaging in innovative and highly productive changes to their companies—the assistance that's being provided through skills training, including through the Yves Landry Foundation program, which allows workers to improve their skills on the job as we work with these companies in order to allow them to grow and be the prosperous—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. New question.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: My question is for the Minister of Research and Innovation. Last week, Sarnia radio reported on the groundbreaking of the Bioindustrial Innovation Centre at the University of Western Ontario's research park in Sarnia. The \$20-million building will be home to Colt WorleyParsons, one of the research park's largest tenants. The building itself will also be state-of-the-art environmentally. Construction of the 75,000-square-foot facility is expected to wrap up by early 2010. Work has already started on the second phase of the multi-million dollar project, and that includes renovations for lab and plant facilities. CHOK AM in Sarnia states that over the next 10 years, the bio-industrial innovation centre will attract over \$1 billion in investment and help create over 1,000 jobs. Minister, can you outline what our government has done to help foster this project? And why the bio-economy—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister?

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Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my friend for the question. Where other provinces are currently experiencing economic prosperity due to their abundance of

fossilized and non-renewable carbon, Ontario is well positioned to become a global leader in the development of renewable carbon. This investment is taking us one step closer to that new reality.

Specifically, Ontario's \$10-million contribution will leverage at least \$15 million in matching funds for the research park from its other partners, including the county of Lambton, the city of Sarnia and private sector organizations. The research park was also successful in securing an additional \$15 million for this project through the federal government's networks of Centres of Excellence for Commercialization and Research. The bioindustrial innovation centre will provide laboratory equipment, incubator space, pilot plant space and office space for growing start-up companies and small businesses.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: Innovation is clearly part of our government's five-point plan, including investment, strategically, in research and innovation. That is in order to grow Ontario's next generation of jobs and prosperity.

One of the emerging high-growth sectors is clean technology and bioeconomy. Ontario produces close to 50 million tonnes of biomass a year, which has the potential to produce enough energy to meet the needs of seven million Ontario homes. We've all been reading reports suggesting that diverting crops for usage as fuel could be increasing food costs and contributing to a global food shortage. Certainly, as stakeholders who will be directly impacted by its outcome, the farmers of my riding in Lambton-Kent-Middlesex have been following this debate very closely. Farmers know that biofuels are more environmentally friendly than those extracted from fossilized carbon. Minister, how will we as a government address the fuel or food—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. John Wilkinson: We are investing in the next generation of biofuels and biomaterials because they create energy and biomaterial products from agricultural by-products such as corn husks and manure. It's not a question of food or fuel; it's the solution of food and fuel.

The province recently invested some \$7.5 million in the University of Western Ontario's bioproducts initiative, which consists of two projects in my colleague's riding: first, the creation of a new 19,000-square-foot research centre, the Institute for Chemicals and Fuels from Alternate Resources—research will focus on the process called pyrolysis, turning agricultural waste such as corn husks into fuel for vehicles, organic insecticides, pesticides and fertilizers; and, second, state-of-the-art optimization research in anaerobic digestion at a nearby dairy farm.

The goal is to quickly move next generation biofuel research from the lab bench to a large—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. New question.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. I want to take this opportunity to remind the Premier of his pre-election commitment to small and medium-sized employers that he would improve the inspection and auditing process for small and medium-sized employers. Given the activities across the province over the last year of what seems to be an army of inspectors who show up at businesses' doors, not to help them, but from what we're hearing, to hinder them, I would like to know, has the Premier forgotten about his pre-election commitment or is the message simply not getting down to those inspectors in the various ministries within the government?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: It's very unfortunate that this member and his party want to water down legislation and regulations when it comes to workplace health and safety. He is not on the side of workers and does not want to protect our workers. The member should know that we have over 250,000 workplace injuries a year—that's 715 a day. That's one every two minutes. So if the member is asking for us not to inspect workplaces, not to protect workers, I say no to that member and no to that party.

Mr. Frank Klees: The Premier referred the question to the wrong minister, because that's not what I was talking about at all. I am talking about the regulatory burden that is being put on small and medium-sized businesses across the board.

Mr. Doug Simon, the district manager for the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, delivered a number of documents to me, letters from employers, that basically say this: "While Ontario businesses, including mine, struggle to cope with high fuel and energy costs, a strong Canadian dollar and intense foreign competition, we are further undermined by the heavy-handed enforcement arm of government."

My question to the Premier is simply this: When will he instruct his government ministries to work with employers in this province, not against them? That's my question.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: This government has worked in partnership with labour, with employees, with employers. We've struck the right balance. We brought stability to the workplace. Labour relations have never been better in 30 years. This is a commendable record. We've brought down workplace injury rates by over 20%. We are working together to build a stronger, healthier Ontario. We're going to continue to do that with our labour relations.

It's unfortunate that this member has a vision of an "us" and "them." We believe that we're all in this together, working together to build a strong Ontario, to build a strong economy. We've got a five-point plan that's working. At the heart of that plan are our employees, our workers, Ontarians. This member should step up to the plate, work for—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Health. There are a growing number of for-profit boutique physician clinics in the city of Toronto, including two in my riding. These clinics charge steep enrolment and annual fees for medically necessary services. They double- or triple-dip by billing OHIP, private insurance and users. They draw scarce physicians out of the public health care system.

Does this government recognize the threat that these clinics pose to our public health care system? If so, when will this government act to address this threat?

Hon. David Caplan: The government has acted, in fact, to pass the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act. I would note, for the people of Trinity-Spadina, that this member opposed that bill. That bill would do a number of things: prohibit extra billing, prohibit charging patients for an insured service, prohibit queue-jumping, and require reporting of violations such as queue-jumping and enforce penalties for violators. Why would this member oppose the universal public health care system and these kinds of principles as outlined by this government and as outlined by my predecessor? It's beyond any imagining.

I want you to know, Speaker, it's through the action and investment of \$11 billion, a 37% increase in health care spending, that we've been able to expand public health care options for all Ontarians, see wait times decrease and the number of front-line medical personnel increase. That's a true commitment to medicare, and I wish—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The time for question period has expired.

PETITIONS

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the skyrocketing price of gasoline is causing hardship to families across Ontario; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government charges a gasoline tax of 14.7 cents per litre to drivers in all parts of Ontario; and

"Whereas gasoline tax revenues now go exclusively to big cities with transit systems, while roads and bridges crumble in other communities across Ontario; and

"Whereas residents in some areas of Simcoe-Grey have been shut out of provincial gasoline tax revenues to which they have contributed; and

"Whereas whatever one-time money has flowed to municipalities from the McGuinty Liberal government has been neither stable nor predictable and has been insufficient to meet our infrastructure needs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to redistribute provincial gasoline tax revenues fairly to all communities across the province."

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

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FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL
FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Mike Colle: This is a petition entitled, "Fairness for the People of Ontario."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the federal government gives more support for economic development, health care and infrastructure to other parts of Canada, and unemployed workers in Ontario get less employment insurance support than in other parts of Canada;

"Whereas the federal system of taxes and equalization extracts over \$20 billion from the people of Ontario every year above and beyond what Ottawa invests in Ontario;

"Whereas laid-off workers in Ontario get \$4,630 less in employment insurance than they would get if they lived in another part of Canada;

"Whereas federal health care money is supposed to be divided equally among all Canadians, but right now Ontario residents are shortchanged by \$773 million per year;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that the federal government stop gouging the people of Ontario and treat them fairly."

I support this petition and affix my name to it.

SEXUAL REASSIGNMENT SURGERY

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham that reads as follows:

"Whereas the previous Progressive Conservative government determined sex change operations were not a medical spending priority and instead chose to invest in essential health care services; and

"Whereas Premier McGuinty said in 2004 that funding for sex change operations was not a priority of his government; and

"Whereas the current Liberal government has eliminated and reduced OHIP coverage for chiropractic, optometry and physiotherapy services; and

"Whereas the present shortage of doctors and nurses, troubling waiting times for emergency services and other treatment, operational challenges at many hospitals, as well as a crisis in our long-term-care homes signify the current government has not met their health care commitments;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario does not fund sex change operations under OHIP and instead concentrates its priorities on essential health services and directs our

health care resources to improve patient” outcomes for all Ontarians.”

I’m pleased to sign this on behalf of my constituents.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children’s Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children’s relationships with their parents and grandparents.

“Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

“Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents; and

“Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

“Whereas subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant’s willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child.

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children’s Law Reform Act as above to emphasize the importance of children’s relationships with their parents and grandparents.”

I shall sign this and send it to the Clerk’s table.

SEXUAL REASSIGNMENT SURGERY

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition that reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the previous Progressive Conservative government determined sex change operations were not a medical spending priority and instead chose to invest in essential health care services; and

“Whereas Premier McGuinty said in 2004 that funding for sex change operations was not a priority of his government; and

“Whereas the current Liberal government has eliminated and reduced OHIP coverage for chiropractic, optometry and physiotherapy services; and

“Whereas the present shortage of doctors and nurses, troubling waiting times for emergency services and other treatment, operational challenges at many hospitals, as well as a crisis in our long-term-care homes signify the current government has not met their health care commitments;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the government of Ontario does not fund sex change operations under OHIP and instead concentrates its priorities on essential health services and directs our health care resources to improve patient care for Ontarians.”

I affix my name in full support.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today from David Snowball, who lives in Mississauga, Ontario.

“Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

“Whereas ‘day surgery’ procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to ‘day surgery’ procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed.”

I agree with this petition and will affix my signature to it and give it to page Sarah.

SEXUAL REASSIGNMENT SURGERY

Mr. Jim Wilson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the previous Progressive Conservative government determined sex change operations were not a medical spending priority and instead chose to invest in essential health care services; and

“Whereas Premier McGuinty said in 2004 that funding for sex change operations was not a priority of his government; and

“Whereas the current Liberal government has eliminated and reduced OHIP coverage for chiropractic, optometry and physiotherapy services; and

“Whereas the present shortage of doctors and nurses, troubling waiting times for emergency services and other treatment, operational challenges at many hospitals, as well as a crisis in our long-term-care homes signify the current government has not met their health care commitments;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario does not fund sex change operations under OHIP and instead concentrates its priorities on essential health services and directs our health care resources to improve patient care for Ontarians."

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Phil McNeely: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the federal government gives more support for economic development, health care and infrastructure to other parts of Canada, and unemployed workers in Ontario get less employment insurance support than in other parts of Canada;

"Whereas the federal system of taxes and equalization extracts over \$20 billion from the people of Ontario every year above and beyond what Ottawa invests in Ontario;

"Whereas laid-off workers in Ontario get \$4,630 less in employment insurance than they would get if they lived in another part of Canada;

"Whereas federal health care money is supposed to be divided equally among all Canadians, but right now Ontario residents are shortchanged by \$773 million per year;

"Whereas the federal government provides economic development support for people living in the north, Atlantic Canada, Quebec and the west, but provides no economic development support for southern Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that the federal government stop gouging the people of Ontario and treat them fairly."

I agree with this petition and will be signing it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have another in the petitions from residents of western Mississauga regarding a western Mississauga ambulatory surgery centre. It reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre

located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I am pleased to sign and certainly support this petition and to ask page Marissa to carry it for me.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition signed by a number of constituents from my riding.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents.

"Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant's willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child.

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the Clerk's table.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Petitions?

There being no more petitions, this House is adjourned until 1 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1201 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO AGRICULTURE WEEK

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to mark the start of the 10th annual Ontario Agricultural Week. It was created by a private member's bill by Bert Johnson, the Progressive Conservative MPP from what was then the riding of Perth. He created it to celebrate

agriculture in Ontario. As you know, agriculture is the second-largest industry in Ontario, creates hundreds of thousands of jobs and helps keep our rural communities strong.

However, I'm sure that Mr. Johnson never envisioned that 10 years later the gallery would be full of young farmers who are here because the government is forcing them out of business. They were all farming in 2007, when the losses on pig production were at their greatest. They all should have received support from the Ontario cattle, hog and horticulture program. But because the government used out-of-date data, they didn't get the support they needed. Their need hasn't gone away. I hope that the minister will use her statement today to answer some of their questions.

Several weeks ago, John Tory and I visited Tina and John Vehof. We saw how hard they have been working to hold on to their farm for their four children. Tina is here today to ask, "Why is the beginning farmer being pushed out of farming?"

Ursula van den Heuvel is here because she received less than 6% of the support she should have. She believes that a large cheque went to the farmer who retired and sold them the farm in 2005. Minister, can you tell her that this isn't true?

Thank you very much for allowing me to make this comment, Mr. Speaker, and I do hope the minister can answer that question when she makes her statement on Agriculture Week.

SENIORS' INFO

Mr. Kuldip Kular: Today I have the pleasure of highlighting for my colleagues a very useful and effective tool for Ontario's seniors: the online Seniors' Info, the first multi-jurisdictional seniors' portal in Canada.

In partnership with the federal government and 23 Ontario municipalities, the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat developed Seniors' Info. The goal of Seniors' Info is to give seniors, their families and service providers access to information and services from three levels of government in one convenient location. The Ontario Seniors' Secretariat developed the concept and plays a leadership role in Ontario. Seniors' Info is sponsored by the Canadian Seniors Partnership, which works collaboratively to improve services for seniors across Canada.

The website provides extremely useful information on topics such as getting ready to retire, retirement planning, vacationing in Ontario, aboriginal services, health care resources, caregivers and life care transition. You can find the website online at www.seniorsinfo.ca.

With Ontario being home to over 1.6 million seniors, the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat is working to improve the quality of life for our seniors and help them lead active, healthy and dignified lives. I urge my colleagues and their constituents to use this multi-jurisdictional portal and become familiar with it. It is just one more way this government is helping Ontario seniors.

TOWN OF AURORA

Mr. Frank Klees: I rise today to call the attention of all members of the House to the prestigious Prince of Wales Prize for Municipal Heritage Leadership, won this year by my hometown of Aurora. This award is bestowed on a Canadian municipality that has demonstrated a strong and sustained commitment to the conservation of its historic places through its exemplary stewardship.

It has been said that the history of Canada is reflected in the history of Aurora. It was in Aurora that the French missionaries Brebeuf and Chaumonot conducted the first church services in York region, and where our Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe admired greatly the magnificence of the area as he and his men worked to develop its early settlement.

It was in Aurora that the Queen's York Rangers, "A" regiment, laid down permanent roots at the Aurora drill shed, and where Edward Blake's famous Aurora speech was delivered during the early years of Canada's statehood. To celebrate Aurora's history and contemporary heritage is to truly enter into the very best of Canadian heritage and culture.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the residents and businesses of the town of Aurora on achieving this prestigious honour, and wish them continued success in maintaining our town's national standard as a leader in Canadian heritage preservation.

JOAN BRENT

Mr. Michael Prue: Each year it is my privilege to stand and talk about the Beaches citizen of the year. Each year, the community comes together to pick one of their own who has done exemplary work in our community. The Beaches citizen of the year this year is Joan Brent. She has been a volunteer and contributor to life in the Beach for a long time.

Some of her great accomplishments include working for the Toronto East General Hospital; Neighbourhood Link; the cancer society; heart and stroke; Share a Christmas from Centre 55; the Terry Fox Run; Habitat for Humanity; East York East Toronto Family Resources, where she has done a great deal of work for a long time and is now the vice-chair of that organization; and Lions international, where she has been involved in a program that helps test students to see that they have proper vision and helps, through LensCrafters, to give glasses to those who cannot afford to get them. She also collects eye glasses for Third World nations so that people in other countries might have the gift of sight.

We congratulate Joan for her many years of hard work in our community. It was a pleasure to be there on September 27 as they unveiled the newest plaque on the wall of fame in Woodbine Park in the Beach with her name. She is the eighth recipient in as many years, and the choice was unanimous. I congratulate her and everyone else who had something to do with her selection. Congratulations again: Joan Brent, Beaches citizen of the year.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Charles Sousa: I rise in the Legislature today to speak about our government's commitment to improving public transportation, decreasing congestion on our roads and reducing pollution.

Gridlock on our roads costs the GTA economy \$3.6 billion each year in lost productivity, not to mention the environmental and social consequences. This is of particular concern for the people of Mississauga South, who have to fight traffic every day on their way to work and to get back home to their families.

The GTA is the fourth most congested area in North America and has as many as 64,000 more vehicles added to the road each year. While we have invested nearly \$7.4 billion in public transit since first being elected in 2003, we realize that more must be done. That's why our government plans to alleviate congestion and reduce our impact on the environment. I speak, of course, about Move Ontario 2020. This program and plan intends to build 902 kilometres of new or improved rapid transit that will move people more efficiently around the greater Toronto area.

These investments will lead to reduced congestion on our roads, which will help people and goods get to where they need to go; decreased emissions of greenhouse gases, which will reduce our impact on the environment; less smog, which will make the air we breathe cleaner; as well as better, more sustainable urban development, which leads to strong communities and a higher quality of life.

We have taken the lead on improving public transit—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

MUSKOKA AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Norm Miller: Muskoka Ambulance Communication Service provides call-taking and dispatch services throughout Muskoka. They direct ambulances and also provide dispatch services for the first response team, town of Bracebridge, Georgian Bay and the township of Muskoka Lakes fire departments and Moose Deer Point First Nation Fire.

Muskoka Ambulance Service employs 15 Ministry of Health qualified communication officers, who are all from local communities. As a result, they are rich in local knowledge and expertise unavailable to an outside agency. Muskoka Ambulance is 100% funded by the Ministry of Health.

Last week they were told that the Ministry of Health is considering moving dispatch services out of the region, to Barrie. The effect of this could be devastating. When dispatchers receive 911 calls, they are often from tourists on a cellphone who are unfamiliar with the area. As a result, local landmarks are used to describe an accident or emergency site. Losing local dispatchers could mean added minutes in response times as dispatchers unfamiliar with our area try to pinpoint emergency scenes—not to mention the local jobs that will be lost.

Once again, the Ministry of Health is making decisions that cut health services in our region, put health concerns behind government dollars and take jobs out of our communities. Your government is still collecting the health tax from Ontarians, but for constituents in my riding, they're getting less and less for their tax dollars.

My question for the Minister of Health is: What is the price of one life? When you decide to transfer these jobs out of Muskoka, are you willing to accept responsibility for lost lives?

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AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to recognize October as Autism Awareness Month. Education Minister Kathleen Wynne and Children and Youth Services Minister Deb Matthews have been working together to ensure successful outcomes for children and youth with autism spectrum disorders. I'm proud of the progress we've made to help students with ASD.

I would like to highlight just a few ways our government is making a difference to support the over 9,000 students with autism spectrum disorder enrolled in our publicly funded education system. We're supporting seven regional teams who are finding new ways to effectively deliver services to students with autism spectrum disorder through collaboration. Over the last two years, we've invested \$17 million to train teachers, teachers' assistants, school principals, school teams and other educators to support students with ASD.

Our government recognizes that more needs to be done. But, once again, I remind all of our members and the public that October is Autism Awareness Month, and I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing it.

INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL

Mr. David Zimmer: I want to talk about the public infrastructure that is so vital to our life here in Ontario. Past governments neglected public infrastructure investments. This led to closed hospitals and crumbling highways. After years of neglect and underinvestment, much of Ontario's infrastructure had deteriorated and was out of date. Some estimates pegged the deficit cost at more than \$100 billion. This is just one of the many hidden deficits our government inherited from the previous government.

In 2003, Ontario voted to end that regime of neglect and to invest in public infrastructure renewal. In 2005, our government created ReNew Ontario, a five-year, \$30-billion program that matches investment decisions with land use and community developments to stimulate economic growth, to build infrastructure where it can best be accommodated, and at the same time protect Ontario's rich agricultural assets and natural heritage.

By 2010, our government, with its partners, will have invested \$5 billion to improve health care facilities, another \$11.4 billion for transportation investments, \$10

billion for schools, a billion for the infrastructure justice system and \$600 million for new affordable housing. Ontarians applaud these actions of the McGuinty government. They are angry at the actions of previous governments for their cut-and-run mentality that bankrupted—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Phil McNeely: The federal government needs to treat the people of Ontario fairly. The Prime Minister claims Ontario's unemployed workers are treated fairly and equally compared to all other provinces, going so far as to say, "There are rules that assist economies that have a higher or seasonal unemployment rate. As patterns of unemployment change those rules apply to Ontario as to any other province."

Well, that's not the case. Ontario's unemployed workers receive \$4,600 less in employment insurance than if they lived in other regions of the country. If Ontario's unemployed were being treated fairly by the federal government, then why has the Harper government short-changed Ontario's unemployed by \$2.1 billion?

These are tough economic times for everyone. I know I speak on behalf of my caucus colleagues when I say I just want to ensure our government is able to build the best defence for the people of Ontario during these challenging times. That is why we have introduced our five-point plan to help ensure Ontario's economy remains strong. All we are asking in return from our federal government is to be treated fairly. Ontario is shortchanged in the Building Canada fund by \$970 million. We are shortchanged in federal health funding by \$710 million.

To be treated fairly, the shortchanging of Ontario must end. Enough is enough. I join the rest of my caucus in asking for a fair deal for Ontario and encourage all of the hard-working people of Ontario to sign the online petition demanding a fair deal for Ontario from our federal government.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Just to remind the members that the members' statements are set out at a minute and a half, and I will be very diligent in cutting off any pro-government statements or anti-government statements at a minute and a half. I've given a little more latitude to some of those who are celebrating good news or individuals in their riding—I don't have a problem with those—but any pro-government, anti-government or electioneering are going to be cut off very tightly at a minute and a half.

Reports by committees? Introduction of bills? Motions.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 97(g), the requirement for notice be waived with respect to ballot items 40 and 42.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the Standing Committee on Estimates.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 60(c), the Standing Committee on Estimates be authorized to postpone consideration of the estimates of the Ministry of Energy and proceed with consideration of the estimates of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I seek unanimous consent for us to revert to introduction of bills for but a brief moment.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TRAINING FOR WORKERS ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LA FORMATION DES TRAVAILLEURS

Mr. Marchese moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 107, An Act to promote workforce training /
Projet de loi 107, Loi visant à promouvoir la formation
de la main-d'oeuvre.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The bill enacts the Training for Workers Act, 2008. The act requires every employer with a payroll of \$1 million or greater to contribute at least 1% of the payroll amount to workforce training. Any shortfall is to be contributed to the workforce skills development and recognition fund. The fund is administered by a committee composed of representatives of labour unions, employees and government, and the committee may use the money in the fund to promote and support workforce skills development and related measures and initiatives.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ONTARIO AGRICULTURE WEEK SEMAINE DE L'AGRICULTURE EN ONTARIO

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I rise to remind Ontarians that today marks the beginning of Ontario Agriculture Week, and what better time than the week leading up to Thanksgiving to recognize the hard work and dedication of Ontario farmers.

Cette semaine représente une excellente occasion pour mes collègues et les citoyens de l'Ontario de réfléchir à notre bonne fortune de pouvoir avoir accès sur place à certains des meilleurs aliments au monde.

As you have heard, good things do grow in Ontario. Our Pick Ontario Freshness strategy is a huge success, and I credit much of that success to the consistent quality of food produced by Ontario farmers.

This government is pleased to be a partner in that success. In the 2008 budget, we announced an additional \$56 million over the next four years in the Pick Ontario Freshness strategy and the farmers' market strategy. As part of the Pick Ontario Freshness strategy, we recently launched the \$12-million, four-year Ontario market investment fund. This includes support for local food networks and other industry efforts in promoting local foods.

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I'm also pleased that many major retailers have caught the wave and have developed buy-local strategies of their own in response to increasing consumer demand. Never before has there been a more exciting time to try and buy homegrown and locally sourced foods.

But we can do more. We're working hard to put the spotlight on fresh, high-quality foods grown and produced right here in Ontario. That's one reason why the Foodland Ontario program has been expanded, and it now includes deli, fresh meats, dairy and baked goods.

Today I'd like everyone in this Legislature and everyone across Ontario to challenge themselves to make Ontario food a part of every meal you eat. You'll be surprised how easy it is and how tasty it is, and truly what a difference it makes. It's good for you, it's good for farmers, it's good for the communities they live in, and it's also good for our environment.

Consumers too can be agents of change. In addition to challenging consumers to make Ontario food a part of every meal, I also challenge Ontario consumers to demand that their local food retailers carry more Ontario products. So if it's not in your local grocery store or on your favourite menu, it's time that you demand it. Ontarians know that Ontario's food producers grow, raise and produce the highest-quality food products that are among the very best in the world. You will be helping yourself, your neighbours, our farmers, your community, the environment and our province when you do so.

WORLD TEACHERS' DAY JOURNÉE MONDIALE DES ENSEIGNANTS

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I rise in the House today to recognize a group of very special people: the people who work in our schools and our school boards. Yesterday was World Teachers' Day, a day for us to celebrate the difference these individuals make in the lives of thousands of young people.

Our educators and support staff give us more than enough reasons every day to celebrate them and to say thank you, and I want to take this opportunity to do just that. I want to thank them for their creativity, connecting what happens in the classroom with the world of work, making it real and relevant for students. I want to thank them for their energy and for inspiring students to take an active interest in the environment, in languages, in math, in science, in the arts, in technology and so much more. And I want to thank them for their patience with students who are struggling to understand a concept and for their determination to reach everyone. It is their caring and individualized attention that inspires students to succeed and motivates them to reach higher.

Ce sont eux qui assurent la propreté, la santé et la sécurité dans nos écoles. Ils font de nos écoles des centres accueillants dans les communautés et contribuent ainsi à instiller de la confiance dans nos écoles.

They challenge young minds, open new doors, and help each student learn to the best of his or her ability. They make a tremendous difference in the lives of our young people, and our students will remember them for it.

When we talk about public confidence, it is often individual experiences that matter most, the individual experiences that our educators and support staff provide every day. When we talk about student achievement in helping struggling students, it is the people working in our education system who help students in the early years develop a solid foundation in literacy and numeracy.

Et quand les élèves entrent l'école secondaire, nous savons qu'un adulte attentionné peut faire toute la différence pour ceux qui éprouvent des difficultés.

We have come a long way in education over the past few years. Class sizes are down, student achievement is on the rise, and more students are graduating from high school. We have the individuals who work in our schools and our boards to thank for that, and we will continue to work in partnership with them as we move forward. They are dedicated, professional, and they clearly demonstrate an outstanding commitment to supporting students.

We can invest in school buildings and resources, we can introduce new programs and mandate smaller class sizes, but it is the caring and individual attention that comes from the adults in our schools that makes the difference.

Les exemples d'excellence sont nombreux dans nos écoles.

World Teachers' Day reminds us once again to celebrate that excellence and to thank the people who make it possible.

Henry Brooks Adams said, "A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops," and that is so true.

Je suis sûre que nous nous souvenons tous avec gratitude des gens qui nous ont influencés lorsque nous étions sur les bancs de l'école.

To the educators and support staff across the province, once again I offer my most sincere and heartfelt thanks for what you do.

CUSTOMER SERVICE WEEK

SEMAINE DU SERVICE À LA CLIENTÈLE

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Today marks the beginning of Customer Service Week. Around the world, people are celebrating the importance of service in our daily lives. Everyone is a customer at some point. Whether you're in a grocery store, at your doctor's office or visiting your local library, customer service plays a vital role in every organization.

As political representatives, we too have an important role to play in providing services, and our customer base is extensive. We serve more than 12 million people in Ontario each and every day.

Cette semaine constitue une formidable occasion de réfléchir à la façon dont nous, les membres de l'Assemblée, pouvons améliorer le service que nous fournissons à toute la population ontarienne, y compris aux personnes ayant un handicap.

L'Ontario compte plus d'un million et demi de personnes qui ont un handicap, et nous savons que ce nombre continuera d'augmenter à mesure du vieillissement de la population. Or, chacune de ces personnes fait partie de la clientèle de notre gouvernement et de nos services publics.

A person with a disability can choose where to buy his or her groceries, or where to buy their children's clothing, but there is only one place people can go to get their health card, driver's licence or birth certificate. All Ontarians should be able to easily access their government and their public services. We know that making our services and our province accessible to people with disabilities is the right thing to do. That is why the members of this House unanimously passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

By 2025, we envision an Ontario where everyone can shop in the same stores, work in the same places and have the opportunity to experience everything our province has to offer. This is our goal, and I'm pleased to say that we are already making progress. We are developing accessibility standards that will help identify and remove the barriers that prevent people with disabilities from fully participating in our society. Earlier this year, our first accessibility standard for customer services became law. This means that the services we provide in the public sector must be accessible to all Ontarians, regardless of their ability, by 2010; the private sector will follow in 2012.

Nous nous devons de montrer l'exemple. Quand la population de l'Ontario constatera que le secteur public offre des services à la clientèle accessibles à tous et à toutes, il sera moins difficile pour le secteur privé de faire de même. Notre ministère s'emploie à concevoir de remarquables outils et ressources pour aider les personnes concernées à apprendre à répondre aux besoins des clients qui ont un handicap. Je vous invite à visiter le site Web accesson.ca pour en savoir plus sur les possibilités d'intégrer l'accessibilité dans tous nos services.

Accessible customer service is really just good customer service. It's about listening and responding to the unique needs of each customer, client and citizen. Often, small changes can make a big difference. We don't need to be experts on disabilities or fluent in sign language to provide good service to people with disabilities, but we need to ask all customers how we can help, listen to their needs, and be willing to work on finding the best solutions.

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I know we all strive to provide the best service we can to the people of this province. By continuing to work together, I know we can reach our goal of an Ontario where our businesses and organizations are open to each and every customer and where our province is inclusive to everyone. That is the vision of this government and the spirit of Customer Service Week.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Statements by ministries? Responses?

ONTARIO AGRICULTURE WEEK

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise to respond to the minister's statement on Ontario Agriculture Week. I'm proud of the many hard-working farmers in Ontario and the contribution they make to the communities in our province, but I wish the minister had used her statement to explain what she's going to do to address the urgent need of these beginning farmers in the gallery and the many more like them across the province.

Minister, Wayne and Geoff Bartels, in the gallery here today, have worked with their family since 2005 to build an award-winning hog farm. These are the types of young farmers we should be recognizing and encouraging. Instead, they watched as the pig farmers around them got cheques, and they received nothing. Their two families and their parents all depend on the income of this farm, and they aren't sure they're going to be able to continue.

In 2007, Tom Murray shipped over 11,000 hogs—he's in the gallery—but he received only \$347 from the cattle, hog and horticulture program. His son, Travis, is with him today and wants to go into farming too, but Tom has had the sad job of trying to talk him out of it because he just doesn't believe that there is a future in agriculture.

Minister, these are just a few of the stories of the people who were missed because money went to retired and deceased farmers instead of the new young farmers who need it, people who were missed because the pro-

gram had no application and no appeal. They are here to tell you that the bank is calling. They're having trouble getting feed delivered. They're getting closer and closer to losing their farm.

Minister, the answer for them can't be that you will fix the next program. The people who are missed by this program won't have a next time. This government needs to take action to help them now, or in the future there will not be any Ontario agriculture to celebrate.

WORLD TEACHERS' DAY

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I rise in the House today to recognize educators across this province of Ontario for their hard work, for their dedication and for their commitment to our children. Through their efforts, Ontario will continue to graduate the best and the brightest as they prepare our students to enter a competitive global marketplace.

Teaching is a vocation as well as a profession that is perfected over time. Practised in the art of listening, educators often go beyond the call of duty to draw reluctant children into the joys of learning. Our teachers are role models who spend a significant amount of time each day with our children. The influence and overwhelming responsibility of that commitment is one of the reasons we hold our teachers in such high regard. To quote Ever Garrison, "A teacher is a compass that activates the magnets of curiosity, knowledge and wisdom in the pupils."

We as legislators, as parents and as grandparents thank the educators across our province and around the world who seek to bring out the best in our students and instill in them a thirst for learning that lives on long after the school bell has rung. Thank you for the work that you do and the legacy you are leaving to all of us.

CUSTOMER SERVICE WEEK

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to rise to comment on the minister's Customer Service Week statement. There are two sentences in particular I'd like to highlight and speak specifically to: "All Ontarians should be able to easily access their government and their public services," and "We are developing accessibility standards that will help identify and remove the barriers that prevent people with disabilities from fully participating in our society."

We have just spent the last six months discussing Bill 77, and I have heard from more families who are dealing with lack of service from this government on the Passport funding and individualized funding. They don't feel any better listening to the speaker talk in platitudes when they are getting no service from the government. Less than 20% of the people who qualify and apply under Passport for individualized funding are receiving it. It's not reasonable, and it is certainly not offering more services for Ontarians.

We hear constantly from this government about how they will increase new standards, how they will put new

regulations in. What is missing is the other part of the puzzle, which is how you expect them to pay for it. When you tell hospitals, municipalities and schools that they must make their workplaces accessible, you don't put the other part of the announcement in, which is how you expect them to pay for it. You fund those organizations and yet you refuse to assist them when they do want to make their workplaces more accessible for their employees and all Ontarians.

WORLD TEACHERS' DAY

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I join the Minister of Education in recognition of World Teachers' Day. World Teachers' Day was first recognized by UNESCO in 1994, and 42 years later, this document is still very relevant. It's relevant because of the work that they do with young people.

We New Democrats—like, indeed, many others—appreciate and respect teachers for this very difficult and important work they do in helping to build our young people intellectually and emotionally. And yes, elementary and secondary teachers do an important job, but today I also want to emphasize the work of elementary teachers because they are the ones who help to prevent problems as they get into our high school system.

Today, they face many, many stresses—the stresses of many special education kids who end up in the regular classroom—and they don't have the help and the resources that they need to do their jobs adequately. The regular teacher has double duty more than ever before. They teach ESL kids who are not being taught by specialist teachers, so regular teachers have a big job on their hands to do that. We have more split classes than ever before, so the elementary teacher is teaching under a great deal of stress. We have more kids in our classrooms in grades 4 to 8 than ever before. Yes, they have a tough and demanding job. We need to support the work they do so they can do the preventive work for our high school teachers as they receive them.

This is an important day to recognize their work, and today I recognize in particular the elementary teachers who need our support and need in particular the support of this government to make their job a lot easier.

ONTARIO AGRICULTURE WEEK

Mr. Peter Kormos: This Minister of Agriculture has more nerve than a toothache to stand up here in this Legislature as one of Dalton McGuinty's Liberal front-benchers and talk about celebrating Ontario Agriculture Week. Farmers have got nothing to celebrate. Farmers have been subsidizing consumers in this province for far too long and are doing more so at an unprecedented rate right now, and this government is putting them under direct attack.

You want to talk about farmers? You tell me what the peach and pear farmers down in Niagara have to celebrate because this government let CanGro close its

doors, move its shop out of this country, out of this province—not just the good jobs alone but the hundreds and hundreds of acres of peaches and pears that are going to lie fallow down in Niagara.

Talk to David Wiley, grape grower down in Niagara, who has tonnes of grapes rotting on the vine because this government lets Ontario wine be called Ontario wine when there's but 30% Ontario grape juice content, 70% plonk from Chile or Lord knows where, and Lord knows what was done to it en route to this province and this country. Those grape growers are at risk because this government refuses to take the simple step of ensuring that when a consumer buys Ontario wine, it's 100% Ontario grapes—good-quality grapes, let me tell you.

Farmers in this province have never been so desperate for the support of a government to help them through the increasingly difficult times of the importation of cheap food product. We've got a federal government that's selling them out on a daily basis when it comes to eliminating tariffs on foreign produce, especially South American produce, cheaply produced, produced at Lord know what risk to the consumer, never mind the stuff that might come in from China from time to time. We don't need to hear anything more about that.

I say, if this government wants to celebrate farmers and agriculture, it had better sit down at the table with the OFA and farmers in this province and start cutting some real deals to protect their livelihoods.

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CUSTOMER SERVICE WEEK

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm pleased to rise to celebrate Customer Service Week: serving customers with disabilities. Certainly accessibility standards for customer service for people with disabilities are important, and we in the NDP agree that every person with disabilities should have access to the services he or she needs. The government goes on to say that all Ontarians should be able to easily access their government services. One of the services that people with disabilities depend on is ODSP, the Ontario disability support program, yet since this government has been in power, the ratio of workers to recipients has gone way down. Now every worker has a huge caseload. People with disabilities who need to get in touch with their workers because things are not going the way they should can't, have a long wait, and don't get to phone in. This is not service.

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. John Wilkinson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe that we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the Standing Committee on Estimates.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I move that the Standing Committee on Estimates shall suspend its consideration of estimates until Wednesday, October 15, 2008.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR DES IDÉES D'AVENIR

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 2, 2008, on the motion for second reading of Bill 100, An Act to amend the Corporations Tax Act and the Taxation Act, 2007 / *Projet de loi 100, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'imposition des sociétés et la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Charles Sousa: I'd like to talk a little bit about the Ontario tax exemption for commercialization. As you know, we have a five-point plan for the economy, and it includes investing in and creating an environment for innovation. This legislation is a key component within our five-point plan to encourage investment. It also fits in strategic tax cuts to encourage investment. This is about jobs, the next generation of jobs, and bringing those jobs to Ontario.

The Ontario tax exemption for commercialization is an effort to further support innovation in the Ontario economy. The act produces proposes a 10-year tax exemption for new corporations that commercialize intellectual property developed by qualifying Canadian universities, Canadian colleges, Ontario centres of excellence and other such research institutes. The legislation, if passed, would authorize a refund to qualifying corporations equal to the amount of income tax and corporate minimum tax paid by the corporation. A qualifying corporation would be exempt from Ontario corporate tax and corporate minimum tax for its first 10 years. It must be established, however, after March 24, 2008, and before March 25, 2010.

We've made strategic tax cuts for business to encourage investments, and they amount to almost \$3 billion in annual savings for Ontario businesses when fully phased in. We have eliminated the capital tax for manufacturers and resource firms retroactive to 2007, resulting in a \$190-million rebate; cut the capital tax by 21%, retroactive to 2007, for all businesses; and we are on our way to fully eliminating the capital tax by 2010. Our federal-provincial corporate income tax rate is also almost seven percentage points lower than our major trading partners in the US-Great Lakes states, and it is lower than the federal state CIT rate in all 50 US states.

We have a comprehensive five-point plan for the economy, and it's more than just tax cuts; it's about improving and increasing jobs. We will continue to invest in education, health care and the environment.

I believe this to be an important piece of legislation. Bill 100, the Ideas for the Future Act, 2008, is about turning innovation into Ontario jobs by establishing high-

tech companies that will, in turn, provide a boost to our economy. This bill provides a 10-year corporate income exemption for new companies that are homegrown, and their homegrown ideas here in Ontario, with new ideas and new products. This is a landmark corporate tax measure and it's the first of its kind in Canada. New businesses in Ontario that commercialize eligible intellectual property, developed at qualifying Canadian colleges, universities or research institutes would be eligible to claim this 10-year corporate income tax refund.

This is good news for communities like mine in Mississauga South. In Mississauga South we are trying to celebrate, motivate and encourage rehabilitation and revitalization of the area, particularly around the southern corridor. What we need are new companies to come into Ontario and to attract them to invest in Ontario so as to enable us to not only have new products and new ideas but to be more competitive on the global stage. Our economic and social prosperity is dependent on this ability to innovate and to compete. Our innovation agenda is aimed at igniting growth in the industries that will shape our future and create Ontario's next generation of jobs and prosperities.

In Mississauga South, and in Mississauga generally, we are fortunate to have many companies that have taken the lead on innovative technology. They are celebrated not only here in Ontario, but across the world, by having become members at the forefront of their respective industries.

For this bill, this Ideas for the Future Act, 2008, we also have the support of various institutions. I look at Dr. Paul Genest, president and CEO of the Council of Ontario Universities, and I quote: "Ontario is the fourth largest biomedical research centre in North America, a global leader in digital media and information and communications technologies and one of the top provinces in alternative energy and climate change initiatives. This enlightened new tax measure will help to create a greener, healthier and economically stronger province by tapping into our research excellence, strengthening the partnerships between researchers and businesses and promoting commercial success."

Linda Franklin, president and CEO of Colleges Ontario, writes: "Ontario's colleges have a successful track record for working together with business and industry and we support this measure to promote applied research and innovation. Half of the jobs in the next 15 years will require the ability to use technology that has not yet been invented and Ontario must be ready to lead the way in technological innovations."

We, as a government partner, must be prepared to facilitate. We as a province must be at the forefront. I encourage all of us to support this bill going forward. It's good for our economy, it's good for our businesses and it's good for the creation of jobs. Our five-point plan talks at some length about ways to take a balanced approach to initiate and move forward in our economic platform. For Ontario to be competitive within Canada is one thing. For Ontario, and Canada, to be competitive on

a global stage requires us to be leaders in innovation, to lead in regard to inciting and enabling our new companies coming into Ontario to have all the resources necessary for it to succeed. This bill putting a foot forward will enable just that. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments? The honourable member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd first like to be on the record as saying that anything in this current climate in the economy that can be done to encourage, reward and incent new business and innovation we would be supportive of, for sure. If you look at the explanatory notes in the bill, and I might say to the members here that this was introduced just recently, and it's a fairly comprehensive bill—I see this as another glowing example of Liberal red tape. The intent is fine, and it's well-intentioned to reward new business. We would know that the history of new business and commercialization is often unsuccessful. There is a lot of venture capital involved. There is a lot of risk-taking, to the extent that small and angel investors get involved in trying to bring something to market. Often it's out of the venue of a university or college, and often involving academics, whether it's in the areas that the speaker mentioned—biotech and technology of communication and digital technologies are important. We would be supportive of that.

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It says here, "The amendments set out other conditions that must be satisfied and include provisions intended to prevent tax avoidance." It sounds pretty innocuous at the outset. But if you look at it, it goes on to say that to implement the Ontario tax exemption for commercialization, there are a number of requirements that must be fulfilled. In fact, that's more red tape and audits. It goes on to say that the Minister of Research and Innovation will issue a certificate of eligibility, which means they will be audited. So there are people coming in to check this and that. There's no clear mandate.

Obviously, evidence is here that small business creates most of the jobs. Small business doesn't have the infrastructure of government, to have government inspectors in and say, "Oh, by the way, you haven't met one of the requirements."

We support it, but it's simply more red tape from the Liberal government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's interesting that I hear the Conservative members talking about red tape. I'm getting kind of confused these days, because I'm watching Sarkozy in France, standing in the Legislature, with the powers that be, talking about the need to regulate capitalism. Then you've got George Bush, the guy who's the beacon of the right in the White House, in the United States, and, God, he's out nationalizing the financial institutions of the United States. And then you've got that other guy, Mr. McCain, who wants to run to replace George Bush, that other guy from the right. He wants to regulate Wall Street. It seems to me you're completely

out of step with the right-wing base of not only North America, but the right-wing base of Europe overall.

I just think it's rather ironic at this particular time, as we take a look at what's happening with the financial meltdown that we see in the stock market generally. Because if we've learned one thing, we've learned the government does have a role to make sure that we set in place safeguards in order to protect citizens. I understand what the member is trying to get at, that you don't want to make whatever we do so onerous that it's going to cost a small business or an entrepreneur thousands and thousands of dollars to administer something. I understand that argument. But I get a little bit nervous when we start talking in generalities. Why have they got into this mess in the United States? Because they basically did release all of the red tape, as you call it, in the financial institutions when it came to lending money to people, that at the end of the day couldn't afford to lend it—and then basically further changing the rules around Wall Street so that they were able to sell all these mortgages off to other companies and they could speculate about how much money they can make.

So I just say, as a social democrat, I understand that government has tools that it has to use, and you can't be so restrictive with those tools that you get in the way of enterprise being able to move forward and to invest and do the things they've got to do. But you've got to have some rules. It's a little bit like having a freeway with no speed limits. You need to have speed limits at times.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: I want to thank the member from Mississauga South for his support of this incentive program, really, for new ideas and new businesses. I think what really intrigued me more, almost, was the member from Timmins—James Bay, who brought up a very timely topic in response to the member from Oshawa.

I just saw the CEO of Lehman Brothers on CNN. Lehman Brothers collapsed, and he was paid \$489 million.

Hon. John Wilkinson: US.

Mr. Mike Colle: US. He walked away with that \$489 million. It collapsed, so the shareholders were all left holding the bag. The head of Lehman Brothers is laughing with his \$489 million. That's why we need government to support and to regulate—unlike the member from Oshawa, who believes in unfettered capitalism. It doesn't work. The Bush/McCain/Lehman Brothers legacy is not what we want in Ontario.

We need government to help support and ensure that new ideas—one new idea I'm trying to get to market here in Ontario is the on-demand water heaters. We all have these 50-gallon water heaters cooking water in our basements, and here we are all sitting here. Yet if you want to get a little on-demand water heater, you've got to pay 3,000 bucks in Ontario—the same on-demand water heater you can get for about 400 bucks anywhere in Europe or South America. I hope the Minister of Innovation is listening. Let's support an innovator in Ontario

who can give us an on-demand water heater we can put in our homes, save energy, save money and provide jobs, so that people in Mississauga and Stratford can build on-demand water heaters for \$500.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I appreciate the opportunity to get back to Bill 100, the Ideas for the Future Act. As the member for Durham so aptly put it when he started the discussion this afternoon, normally you would find that those of us here in the Progressive Conservative Party are in favour of any kind of tax relief. We believe that Ontarians are too heavily taxed, and we would normally support it. But this bill in particular is way too narrow; it deals with only a very, very small part of the economy that's going to be able to benefit from this and doesn't deal with many other industries that are under siege right now. We do support the concept of tax relief, but because this one is too narrow, we have some significant concerns with it.

The other interesting point is that the total decision-making with respect to what is an "eligible commercialization business" is one that is "in the opinion of the Minister of Research and Innovation, an advanced health technology business, a bioeconomy business, a telecommunications, computer or digital technologies production business." That's a lot in the hands of the minister, and I would say that there should be some clearer criteria for it to be able to be applied, because it seems somewhat arbitrary that one business might qualify and another business might not. Even companies such as McCain, Gildan, Magna and Four Seasons, as I understand it, might not be able to qualify under this new legislation. That's something, I would submit, that the minister might want to take a look at with respect to the criteria to be used.

Finally, there's the whole idea of this being an exemption. In fact, it's not. This is a refund application that's made after the taxation year. It would seem that a process could be employed that might be a little bit more efficient, in terms that it wouldn't require a cumbersome procedure in order to give the money back in refund form after. I think there are still some significant concerns that need to be addressed with this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The member from Mississauga South has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Thank you to all those who contributed to today's debate. I take into consideration some of the issues that have been put forward, and I reinforce and remind everyone that this is a bill that is part of a broader picture, which is the five-point plan put forward by the government. We indeed are faced with some challenging times, and this bill is a component of the strategies going forward to complement and encourage innovation and investment and, more importantly, produce jobs in Ontario.

Let's remind everyone that in Ontario we do have strong fundamentals—strong economic fundamentals—and it's important that we take a balanced approach going

forward. It's not just about tax cuts; it's about ensuring we have sufficient incentives for new businesses to be incubated and created right here at home in Ontario, in our respective ridings.

I would also consider that for Ontario to be competitive on a global stage requires a strong government partner. We're here to facilitate, where we can, those new businesses coming to establish themselves in Ontario—I consider some of the companies right in my own riding of Mississauga South, and in Mississauga generally. We have a number of innovative companies that exist today because of the entrepreneurs and their ability to choose Ontario. Ontario is a competitive jurisdiction because of a number of factors. One of them is our health care. Another is our infrastructure proposals going forward.

This particular bill, which tells them we are going to also partner with them in innovation, is an incentive for them to get established and started right here. I remind everyone that this bill is part of a broader picture and a component of that strategy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise today to speak for a few moments on Bill 100, An Act to amend the Corporations Tax Act and the Taxation Act, 2007. The short title is the Ideas for the Future Act, 2008. I want to put on the record a couple of the sections of the explanatory note. One is "that to qualify for the Ontario tax exemption for commercialization, a corporation must be a new corporation that is not formed as a result of an amalgamation or merger of two or more corporations. If its income for the taxation year under the Income Tax Act (Canada) is greater than zero, all or substantially all of its gross revenue for the year must be from one or more eligible commercialization businesses and all or substantially all amounts received or receivable by it on the disposition of capital property must be from the disposition of capital property in the ordinary course of an eligible commercialization business. The amendments set out other conditions that must be satisfied and include provisions intended to prevent tax avoidance."

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As some of the previous people have mentioned, I would try to be supportive of any bill that helps any kind of business. But I think we can go much, much further, especially in times when the economy is taking a downturn and we need to do everything we can to prop up our companies. In particular, I'll put on the record a number of times, I think the first thing governments have to do—and I don't think we've seen a very good effort from the current government—is make businesses feel welcome in the province of Ontario. They have to feel like they're wanted here. They have to feel like any money they're investing is valued, any jobs they create are valued. If we can do anything for manufacturers, for farming, for tourism operators, and those are the people who are having a very, very desperate time right now, it's eliminating red tape and making it easier to do business and making people feel welcome in our province.

I heard today a number of different comments about the five-point plan. The one thing that I notice is not in the five-point plan is the elimination of almost 300,000 manufacturing jobs since the beginning of 2005. I don't really know how the five-point plan has helped the people that have shut these plants down.

I can tell you, in my riding just a couple of weeks ago, we had a very, very innovative company, Huronia Precision Plastics—I was given a briefing note today by one of my colleagues who had heard about it through the plastics industry as well. This business was started, I believe, 11 or 12 years ago. It was started in Ontario, under the Mike Harris government. The government continually criticizes the efforts of Mike Harris; however, the reality is that in Mike Harris's time in government, a million jobs were created in the province of Ontario—Huronia Precision Plastics being one of them, creating almost 100 manufacturing jobs for the automotive parts manufacturer. They were so innovative that the plant could actually operate at night with a cellphone. That's the kind of technology they had. The only people who would have to worry would be—if something went wrong, the people on maintenance would be on standby, and they would immediately go over to the plant at midnight, and it was operated through the computer systems and through the cellphones if there was an emergency. Somehow, we're losing our manufacturing jobs—and this was a company that had very, very highly skilled people. These are jobs that paid a lot of money. Two weeks ago this coming Wednesday, 78 people were told they no longer have employment, and the company has now gone into receivership. I feel that that type of an example is much too common in the province of Ontario. Ten years ago they were welcome, 10 years ago they were making money, and today they're not. I know there will be a million reasons why the government would say they're not to blame, but the reality is these are the kinds of companies that we're seeing going out every day—and now we've seen almost 300,000 of them in the last two and a half to three years.

I know that we had some fairly strong messaging around this. I want to put a few things on the record.

Our critic the member from Niagara West—Glanbrook, Mr. Hudak, has pointed out that Bill 100 defines both innovation and commercialization far too narrowly, which is the problem with the McGuinty government; therefore, it will only have the possibility of helping a tiny segment of the economy, and that's very unfortunate. We heard that in some of the comments earlier. The government-identified priority sectors represent less than 2% of the jobs in Ontario and only a slightly higher proportion of the wages or GDP contribution.

Our party, the PC Party, believes in the free enterprise system and is a party of enterprise. We believe that broad-based tax reductions and lowering red tape are key to turning the economy around. I can emphasize once again that making companies feel welcome is one of the keys things as well. Far too often, manufacturers—and I visited a number of them recently, particularly over the

last few months—are telling me they don't really feel welcome in Ontario anymore. They feel like they're a hindrance, they feel like they're a burden to our government and to our province. I can tell you, it's sad when you've got 500 or 600 employees and your payroll is half a million dollars a week and you're turning around and you're not feeling welcome in your own province. And that does happen.

Our party understands business and how it operates and therefore supports measures to reduce the tax burden and increase investment. However, Bill 100 is not really properly designed and I think it can be improved a long way, as we move forward.

I also want to put on the record some comments, and I'm not sure if these were put on earlier by any of our other caucus members, made by Roger Martin, who told the finance committee in the prebudget consultations on January 21, 2008—and I would like to read Mr. Martin's comments into the record, as we move forward with this bill. It's what people are actually saying. Mr. Martin says:

"We've got to define and support innovation broadly. Innovation is critical to upgrading competitiveness, innovation and policy, and Ontario cannot characterize innovation so narrowly as it does. Whether or not there is a truly conscious consideration of the issue, innovation policy in Ontario construes innovation to be something that happens in a narrow range of industries—computer hardware and software, communications hardware and software, aerospace vehicles and engines, pharmaceuticals and biotechnology, and medical devices—and that innovation is all about scientists working on technology. That is where the vast majority of the funding of all sorts goes to in innovation in Ontario and in Canada.

"Sadly, those sectors that I mentioned, the high-tech sectors broadly speaking, represent less than 2% of the jobs in Ontario and only a slightly higher proportion of the wages or GDP contribution. Even though the general public and policy-makers think that the numbers are dramatically higher in the high-tech-oriented US, they are not; it is a myth. Those sectors also represent less than 2% of the jobs in the US. In fact, the total size of these sectors in Ontario is exactly, precisely the same, down to the second decimal point, relative to the economy in the US: both 1.96% of jobs, not 1.97% or 1.98%—1.96%. So the US is not more innovative than Canada because it has a bigger high-technology sector; it's simply false. It is more innovative because it values, supports and expects innovation across the other 98% of the economy as well as the high-technology sector, and we don't. In Canada, the innovations that made Masonite, Four Seasons, Couche-Tard, Gildan, Magna and McCain global leaders would not be counted as innovation. But America sees FedEx, Wal-Mart, Southwest Airlines and Starbucks as innovators. They are right and we are wrong. We see RIM as a successful global leader due to technology innovation. It is a technology innovator. However, as important as technology innovation is to RIM, equally important to its success was innovation in carrier relationship strategy.

"Ontario needs to recognize that all sorts of business innovations are needed across all sectors of the economy to have a continuously upgrading economy and globally competitive companies. If we want more innovation that makes a difference to the economy, we need to broaden the support for innovation. Currently, we support exactly one type: scientific research. There is no evidence—none—to support the notion that this type of innovation is more valuable in the economy than, for example, business model innovation of the sort that McCain or Starbucks engaged in to create massive value.

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"We should broaden support for innovation projects designed to enhance global competitiveness. If governments in Canada can make a decision to provide funding for promising scientific research projects, why not for promising business innovation projects, which would have the benefit of encouraging Canadians to think that all innovation is created equal?

As I said earlier, those were comments made by Roger Martin to the finance committee pre-budget consultation back on January 21, 2008.

And that's why we say that it's a very narrow gap here; a very narrow number of companies are included. That's why, when we look at the very tight economy we're having today, we have to be far more considerate of all of the other sectors.

I listened very carefully to the member from Oxford when he introduced the young fellows in the audience today, this being Agricultural Week. He talked about the difficulties they're having. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker—being a member from the county of Simcoe, you probably know this as well—there are only two hog-farming operations left in the county of Simcoe. The largest county in the province of Ontario, and we've watched them drop off like flies. So anything that those people can do in their businesses, anything that we can possibly do would be of benefit.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Did you tell your federal counterparts?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I hear the lady from Bruce, or whichever riding she's from, complaining over there. You know what? I can tell you, she's way, way out of whack. Try driving down to Quebec. Drive to Quebec and see how Quebec treats their farmers. There are all kinds of farming operations in the province of Quebec. They're building new silos, new barns; there are new additions being put on homes. The truck dealerships are going well; the car dealerships are going well; the implement dealerships are surviving. In Ontario, they're not. And I can tell you—don't say it's the federal government's fault this time. This is the difference between Ontario and Quebec, and how Quebec treats its farmers versus how this government treats our farmers. There's nothing but a hatred for rural Ontario coming from this government. We see it day in and day out, in all kinds of small companies.

And let me tell you—under this bill, how many companies do we really expect would be covered in rural

Ontario? There are very, very few to begin with, but most of them would be covered in the large centres, and hardly any in rural Ontario.

If you want to talk about the government's hatred for rural Ontario, let's talk about the tourism resorts. They've had one of the worst years ever in history, with all the different things that have happened around the world, plus what's happened here in Ontario. But all we've had out of this government is the tourism czar, the former Minister of Finance, travelling around with this fancy glossy book, telling everybody how wonderful things are and how we must change to accept the future in tourism.

That's not helping people with jobs. That's not helping the resorts that are going bankrupt, and we're seeing it almost every day. We've got big problems out there.

And then we get right over to manufacturing: places like Volvo in Goderich. How many jobs there—550 jobs gone? John Deere—you could go on all day, talking about the job losses we've seen in the province of Ontario under this government, almost 300,000 manufacturing jobs now. And you know what? What have we got?

Interjection.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Well, of course, you know what? It's all about Harper, isn't it? It's all Harper's fault. That's the way you like to put it. You can hear the heckling going on over there. You know what? Who was in government 13 years before Stephen Harper? The mess they made of everything—that's why they got tossed out. Harper is trying to clean up their messes. I give Stephen Harper a lot of credit for inheriting the mess and trying to get this country back on track. He's done an excellent job of it.

I hope that people in this country are smart enough on October 14 to re-elect a Harper government with a majority, so that we can actually get some things done without all this cumbersome activity that we see going on almost every day from the opposition, and the way they're fighting the government and trying to create obstacles to stop the formation of a successful country, which is what Mr. Harper is trying to do.

I want to put one other thing on the record, because I was heckled earlier today when I asked a question of the Minister of Community Safety. These people are actually trying to take credit for the Northern Ontario Medical School. Can you believe that? As a former Minister of Health, Mr. Speaker, I think you probably realized it was Mike Harris who started that. Does anyone remember that? And here they are today, bragging about the Northern Ontario Medical School, pretending they actually did it. I can't believe it.

So we go on and on and on, with all these spin stories around here, but the reality of the matter is this bill is very limited. If it helps a little bit, we'll help; we'll support it. But let's get some more detail there. Let's help more companies. Let's help agriculture. Let's help tourism. Let's help more manufacturers.

What about a tourism resort that was having a difficult time and wanted to change and spend a whole bunch

more money focusing on a whole new clientele? Would they not be worthy of the same kind of benefits that anybody else would receive under this bill? Or a farmer who decided to change his whole operation around so he could utilize the soils etc. Why would he not qualify for this, if it's a benefit? Those are all entrepreneurs, they're all people with very innovative ideas, and I think they deserve every right to any kind of a tax exemption or refund or whatever it may be, as are people who would qualify under this bill.

I could go on here all day, and I know the minister would like to hear me go on all day, because I listened to him brag about his ministry for a number of hours in estimates, and I was trying to be quite nice and polite about it. I thought you did a great job in estimates. The reality of the matter is, we'll be supporting the bill, but there's a lot more wrong in Ontario, and we think this bill could actually include more than it does. It's quite narrow the way it is right now. We'll look forward to further debate and the comments you make after listening to my speech here this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I just wanted to take this opportunity to not only speak about Bill 100 but also to respond to the member for Simcoe North. I just want to jog his memory, just a little bit. I want to remind you what the riding of Huron-Bruce represents. We're the largest in beef; we're the largest in pork; we're the largest in supply management. So for you to stand up and start giving me a lecture on agriculture and how it is affected today—too rich.

I can tell you that what my farmers need is a risk-management program, and the pork and the beef need support from the Harper government. So don't stand up and give me a lecture on what our farmers need today, because that's what they need and it's falling on deaf ears.

Whatever the outcome is in October, the McGuinty government recognizes that our future lies with new technology and working with the sectors in order to move toward a greener economy. I know for the members across the way, "green" is probably a difficult word, but I want to tell you that that is the future. Really, quite frankly, I hope that you're going out with your federal counterparts so that you can hear the concerns first-hand from the agricultural community.

When I hear the member stand up and talk about tourism—our second largest industry is tourism, so we know that they are experiencing challenges. We have been there to assist, and we'll continue to do so, but where are you and why won't you Harperites over there support a regional economic development plan that will help the southwest? Why won't you? Why won't you go to your people on your side and stand up for southern Ontario? Come on. Member for Simcoe North, let's get out there, let's work together—it was passed unanimously—and get it done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: First of all, I'd remind all members that the one thing about politics is that we catch a lot more flies with honey than we do with vinegar, so whoever forms a government, I'm certainly sure we're setting a tone that will be appreciative of working together—maybe not.

But to go back to the bill, I'd been working on a bill in the spring, as I mentioned, very similar to this, and I hope the minister will take a number of things into consideration. You talk about fuels, and even in your opening under subsection 57.13(1), clause (b), where it says, “‘biofuel’ means a liquid fuel made from a biomass resource and includes the liquid fuels ethanol, methanol and biodiesel,” it should include the phrase “but not limited to.”

Part of it is that we need some competition in the fuel sector. What we've done here is talk about the creation, but it's the distribution that's a major problem right now in the biofuel sector. There isn't any incentive for that. What I'd been working on in the spring was working with major manufacturers that found governments in other jurisdictions—that found incentives to start to distribute the biofuels once they're created, because there is no incentive for the current major oil companies to distribute that fuel out there. So what you need to do is find that, and I'd be more than happy to try and pass on some of the information to the minister on how we can incorporate that into the bill to make it more advantageous.

For example, every E85 vehicle coming out of Oshawa and the Big Three can run on 85% ethanol, but there are only four stations in the province of Ontario that can provide that fuel. What we need is an incentive for other stations to sell that fuel and not just create it. It's great to have it, and we've got it there, but there's no incentive to move it forward.

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The other aspect is that there are some other fuels out there now that I'm working with. There is an unwritten rule that allows for a tax exemption on fuel for about five years, but it's unwritten. They need it in writing so they can move forward with some of the distribution of the fuels in the contracts that they have; they just don't have that. Will it take place? I've read the documentation from the feds. The feds have given the okay to move forward with the sale of just GST, and actually suggest PST, but if we can move forward in the other sector, it will help bring in competition in—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to give a few comments to the member from Simcoe North on Bill 100, An Act to Amend the Corporations Tax Act and the Taxation Act, 2007.

I would tend to agree with the statement made by the honourable member that the bill is not well designed. First off, it completely sidelines basic research in favour of commercialization research. If basic research is not well funded, then commercialization is not going to

happen. You cannot fund the end products when you have not funded the basic research that will lead to those products. Good scientific research is developed in the minds of individual scientists. In order for them to create basic research, they need to have the infrastructure, and we need to invest so that we are attractive to the best and brightest minds in the country and in the world so that they will come to Ontario to do basic research. If you fund this, commercialization will happen because those people will bring it to market. To quote the owner of Research in Motion, he certainly supports the idea that you will not recreate another Research in Motion if you don't invest in basic research.

The second problem with the bill is that for most research companies in the advanced health and biotechnology sector to become profitable, it takes eight to 10 years. So if you don't make any profit, you don't pay any corporate taxes. If you don't pay any corporate taxes, you don't get any refund. To think that a refund on companies that take such a long time before they become profitable is going to be a big incentive to create new jobs is not realistic. Those companies take 10 years. They need venture capital. They need access to capital, not a tax credit.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member from Simcoe North has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I thank the members from Huron-Bruce, Oshawa and Nickel Belt for their comments this afternoon, and I appreciated making the speech. I want to respond to the member from Huron-Bruce for a moment.

One of the things that's interesting is that the government is now talking—after 31 months of the Harper government, suddenly Mr. Harper is supposed to make a southern Ontario economic development plan. After 13 years of corruption and overtaxation by the former Liberal government, we never, ever heard this government ask about that. It's only in the last few months that this has come up, and now it's suddenly a priority. After all those months, all those years of Mr. Chrétien and Mr. Martin in Ottawa, this was never mentioned; it was never a priority.

Even when we talked about the fairness issue—and Mr. McGuinty has now got his fairness website up and all that sort of thing—he never talked about fairness in health care or any of that type of thing. He always blamed the Harris government, and everything was fine in Ottawa; Ottawa was sending all the proper money forward and everything else. But you know what? The reality of the matter is that the agricultural industry is having a really difficult time. Maybe it's wonderful around Goderich, where they just lost the 500 jobs. Maybe it's great over there, but I don't think it probably is.

What I noticed when I travelled down to Quebec this summer was that the farmers in Quebec are doing much better, and we've got the same federal government and two different governments—the Quebec provincial government and the Ontario provincial government—and they're certainly treating their farmers differently, as far as I'm concerned.

I can tell you that as we move forward with this bill, I will be supporting the bill, but I'm going to encourage people to make the kinds of comments I've made on the economy today because I think that's where the real problem is with this government and how they handle the economy.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? The honourable Minister of Research and Innovation.

Hon. John Wilkinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good to see you in the chair today.

First of all, I look forward to entering into the debate. I have been watching it here or reading in Hansard what all the members have been saying about Bill 100. I'd like to add some comments and perhaps some clarity for all the members about what we are trying to accomplish with this bill.

First of all, I want to thank the Premier of Ontario. I think history will record that it was the Premier's leadership that allowed us to come to this point today, particularly his decision back in 2005 to create the Ministry of Research and Innovation. I had the privilege of serving as his parliamentary assistant in the previous government, and I'm quite blessed to be the Minister of Research and Innovation in our current government.

As well, I want to thank the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Dwight Duncan, who is carrying this bill in the House. Since this is a tax measure, it falls to the Minister of Finance to carry the bill, but as many people have commented in the House, the Ministry of Research and Innovation and the Minister himself or herself actually has a specific role to play in the administration and the decisions around Bill 100, so I wanted to comment on that.

I would say first of all, to set some context, that we are in the midst of an eight-year, \$3-billion investment on behalf of all of us here in Ontario in something known as the innovation agenda. We are very clear, on this side of the House, that it is innovation and the commercialization of new ideas that will allow us to succeed in the 21st century.

I've been telling people that there was a formula for economic success in the previous century, and it was quite simply this: If you could come up with a local solution to a local problem, you would garner a local market and do quite well for you and your family. That was really the formula for success in the 20th century. But in the 21st century, with the forces of globalization washing across our economy, it seems not only on a daily but even on an hourly basis, we on this side of the House say that there has to be a new formula, and we believe that we know what that formula is: If you can find just a slice of a global solution to a global problem, then the global marketplace and global capital will beat a path to your door. That is really at the heart of Ontario's innovation agenda, and Bill 100 just forms one part of that formula of success that we at our ministry are working so hard to bring into being here in Ontario, the largest and greatest province of this wonderful country.

If there is a great idea in a research institute, in a university or in a college, the question we have to ask

ourselves is, "Where will that be commercialized?" Because a great idea will be commercialized. Where will that idea be commercialized? That is at the heart of Bill 100. We are saying clearly that, in a North American first, if there is a novel idea that has been patented—intellectual property has received a patent and the person who came up with the idea owns the idea and it's very clear as to who legally owns that—if you own that idea and you want to commercialize that idea, the very best place in North America, the very best place in Canada, to commercialize that new idea is here in the province of Ontario, to answer that question, "Where will that commercialization happen?"

That's why I wanted to say to my friend from Nickel Belt that I disagree with her. She said that if we focus all of our attention on world-class basic research, that commercialization will just happen. What we're saying is that commercialization will happen, but this bill answers the question of where it will happen. We have made a commitment in regard to research, both basic and applied, of some \$625 million. I don't think there will be anyone who would be able to challenge our government and what we're doing in regard to our investments in research, whether it's basic research or applied research, whether it's research excellence, which is the talent of our researchers, or whether it's infrastructure, giving our state-of-the-art, world-class, top-notch researchers state-of-the-art, world-class, top-notch tools to do their research. We do that on both sides of the equation.

I was fortunate just in the last few weeks to announce some \$33 million worth of new Ontario Research Fund grants just for research infrastructure, just on the tools that our researchers need to allow them to be world class.

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I wanted to speak specifically about the bill, particularly on the question of whether this bill should be broadened to the private sector. I wanted to let people know, because one would assume from the comments of the opposition—and I would assume perhaps they're just not as informed as they could be, which is why I've decided to enter into the debate—the question of whether or not there are already existing incentives for private sector businesses to do research and what is the tax treatment of that.

I can tell you that in a recent 2006 study by KPMG for the G7, entitled *Competitive Alternatives*, Canada was deemed to have one of the lowest business costs relative to a number of international peers in regard to research. That is a combination—and I want to give credit to the federal government where it's due—of tax measures available to Ontario companies at both the federal and the provincial levels. There is something called a SRED credit, the scientific research tax credit. That is matched by an Ontario innovation tax credit here in the province of Ontario. When the federal Minister of Finance was able to improve that, I can tell you that our government took steps to match that. So I can tell you that in this province, when it comes to doing research, if you are a for-profit business and you are investing in research and

innovation, the taxes that you owe on your profit will be reduced because of that.

But this bill is not specifically geared to companies that are already receiving the benefits of those tax measures. This bill is specifically geared to those innovators, those people across this country at our research institutes, our academic hospitals, our colleges and universities, who discover some novel idea, some groundbreaking new piece of intellectual property, who ask the question, "Where should I commercialize this?" We have sent a very strong signal that we believe Ontario is the place for that innovation to happen.

I would like to comment, as well, about the minister's role. There have been some questions, I think, raised by the opposition about the fact that the minister is to issue these certificates. I think that is the appropriate role of the Minister of Research and Innovation. I can assure the House that each and every decision I make, whether it has to do with academic research or whether it has to do with business excellence, is informed by the great staff, the great people at the Ministry of Research and Innovation, who give me advice on a daily basis as to what is the wisest decision.

I can tell people that there are really two guiding principles in our ministry, the first being that we never allow political science to interfere with science. I have the privilege of being the Minister of Research, and I find it passing strange that down in the United States—

Interjection.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I would say to my new friend that the politicians in the United States have allowed political science to interfere with science, which is why so many scientists in the United States are moving to Canada and to Ontario. Because when they want to do research, they can find that the question of whether or not they should do that research becomes a referendum issue, a ballot issue, in some state election.

Mr. Jeff Leal: That's Sarah Palin in Alaska, exactly.

Hon. John Wilkinson: Exactly. I would say to my friend from Peterborough that if we're going to be a jurisdiction that embraces the power of science, we as a government always have to make our decisions in regard to science based on peer-reviewed global excellence—and that is the standard that we set in this province—and, as well, that we understand the powerful powers of the markets. I agree with the members who have all found religion lately about how there's a need to regulate capitalism. I think we only have to look south of the border to understand how important that is. The markets are a powerful force for change and for innovation.

So it is important for us to understand the appropriate role of government, and that is to act as a catalyst, to bring our top scientists and our business leaders together.

I know the example was of RIM. RIM is a great example of two innovations, one a scientific innovation, which is widely credited to my friend Mr. Lazaridis, about push technology in regard to e-mail, and the other a marketing, business innovation by Mr. Balsillie—

Mr. Jeff Leal: A Peterborough boy.

Hon. John Wilkinson: —a Peterborough boy—and how those two innovations came together to form one of the companies that we're most proud of here in Ontario, as their product is exported around the world.

Why is their product exported around the world? Because about every nine months, they make their product better through the process of innovation. They don't rest on their laurels; they make that product better every nine months. There's a good example of a company that has embraced the concept of innovation.

Many members have talked about the need for venture capital, and I would agree with them. The Ontario venture capital fund now stands at some \$205 million. The \$90 million first pledged by the government has now been matched—oversubscribed—by another \$115 million. I know that the new Ontario venture capital fund is looking for additional money to try to bring that fund up to \$207 million, and the fund managers are working on that. The fund managers have already made an investment.

I also want to mention, while we're talking about Research in Motion, the fact that Research in Motion has announced their new \$150-million BlackBerry Partners Fund, a venture capital fund. We particularly want to applaud them for making an investment here in the province of Ontario.

Many speakers have talked about the fact that, somehow, what we're looking at here is a very small slice of the economy, some 2%. I would disagree, in the sense that at the beginning of the 20th century, the internal combustion engine had been invented, but there were a lot more people in the horse business than in the horsepower business. But it's the horsepower business that transformed the economy of Ontario in the 20th century. The type of investments that we're making in this tax measure has to do with those areas of the economy where Ontario already is a global powerhouse. We're saying to our researchers in institutions right across Canada that when you have breakthroughs in our areas of focus, Ontario is the very best place to commercialize them.

There are also some questions—and, I think, some confusion—in the minds of the opposition in regard to the nature of this. I say to my friend from Whitby that this bill is very clear. One must create a new company after the Minister of Finance made his budget speech in March of this year, and there's a four-year window. You can imagine, if we didn't put some very tight language around this, that you could have a company that could say, "Well, you know what? I have a big company." We'll use RIM as an example. "What we'll do is start a little company, and we'll put one innovation in that company. Then we'll transfer our entire multi-billion-dollar company into that little company, and now we won't pay any income tax for another 10 years."

We're a little smarter than that. The measures in this bill are all about making sure it is very targeted to those researchers, those innovators who have had a breakthrough and who create a company for the purpose of commercializing that innovation. Not the rest of the com-

pany—commercializing that innovation. We've set words around that in the legislation to ensure that we protect the interests of the taxpayer. If we hadn't done that, I think we would be negligent. That's why it's been important for us to clearly define what it is we are looking for in this bill.

I want to say to my friend from Oshawa, the member from Oshawa, that I look forward to working with him on the concerns he has raised in regard to what I think would be an innovative way of distributing biofuels in the province of Ontario. One of those E85 gas stations is in my riding, so I know it quite well. We look forward to that.

I say to my friend from Eglinton—Lawrence, Mr. Colle—he had discussed innovation, here in this House, in regard to smart water heaters, so that those water heaters are not wasting electricity and keeping water warm when we're not in the house. I look forward to working with him, and I know that the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure is also very, very concerned.

I just want to conclude by saying that this measure is part of a suite of efforts we're making at the Ministry of Research and Innovation. We are particularly focused on this \$3-billion, eight-year investment in innovation. We have chosen the areas of focus after an extensive global review of where we're particularly punching above our weight. I would say that expanding the digital universe and the capacity of those of us in Ontario to do that is a great example, because we have this wonderful wealth of multicultural diversity, representing the entire ability of the world to communicate, and we're all living in social cohesion right here in Ontario. So when a company comes up with an innovation in expanding the digital universe, it can be replicated in multiple cultures, multiple languages, almost instantaneously, right here in Ontario, unlike other communities. That's why we have such a focus on digital media.

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When you look at the powerhouse that we are here in Ontario in regard to life sciences, there is a global demand to prevent and to cure disease. That is a global opportunity. We want to ensure that our researchers know that Ontario is the very best place for them to commercialize and take those lifesaving technologies off the shelf in their labs and translate them to the care of patients.

Finally, in regard to the bioeconomy, we all know, as I was saying earlier today, that as a species we have to learn how to be sustainable. We have to learn how to wean ourselves off fossilized carbon. We in Ontario are blessed with having one of the largest repositories of renewable carbon in regard to agriculture and forestry. The research we are doing in this province is geared to making sure that the refineries are beside the mine and the winery is beside the grapes. If we're going to have a new economy based on the bioeconomy, we put it beside our 50 megatons of biomass that we grow each and every year in this province in forestry and in agriculture. We think it's a tremendous global opportunity.

I'm heartened that my colleagues on all sides are interested in supporting this bill. We look forward to it

going to committee and hearing their positive suggestions about how to improve the bill. I hope I've clarified the narrow scope of this bill in a larger context. We look forward to the comments from all sides as this debate continues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I want to continue on with some of the issues that were brought up as the minister was speaking. The difficulty with the distribution of some of the new fuels that are out there, the biofuels, is that, as I mentioned, there is no incentive for the majors. What some of the US jurisdictions found was that there were tax incentives predominantly for the independents or some of the small fuel stations, whether it be Canadian Tire or the UPIs—which might be the case with yours—to convert those tanks over to ethanol on a tax-concession basis so that they have a central distribution point where they can get it out.

Some of the other problems: Actually, there is a fuel that's out; it's been sold on a regular basis in Japan. It fits completely into the vehicles, with no conversions at all required to the vehicle to allow it to use this new fuel. It's much more environmentally friendly, yet the distribution is once again the key problem in this area. The distributors want to verify that they can sell the product on the shelf, in a single unit. They can't sell at the station in volume as a fuel, but they can sell it as an additive, and there are no fuel taxes included in there.

What needs to be done is a standard five-year exemption, written out—it's an unwritten policy that's there—that allows these individuals to bring these new technologies that are currently out there and get them into the system. As it stands now, there is not very much competition and, quite frankly, the majors have zero incentives to start bringing their competitors in to start moving their product at some of the stations.

I've already done the communication. I'm going to bring you down some paperwork and documentation on this, and I will pass it over in the House when I'm done shortly. You can have a look, and hopefully we can move forward on some of these files, to take these new innovations that are out there and start to get them out to the retailer so they can bring in competition and hopefully put a little bit of scare into the fuel companies on the price of gas.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I listened to the comments made by the minister, and he argues that we need to be very targeted in the way that we do this particular initiative. I guess that's one of the points that I want to speak to a little bit later, because as I sit down and talk to entrepreneurs that are running smaller companies—\$1 million, \$2 million or \$3 million dollars a year—part of the problem that they have is that they're struggling, first of all, to run an enterprise and to make some money. They're wanting to do the investment in R&D in order to position themselves so that they have products that they

can sell into the future market. Because you can't just keep on building what you've got; you've always got to innovate, and I agree with him on that point.

As I sit down through this process that I am going through, talking to a lot of different people about these issues, what's becoming clearer and clearer to me is that, yes, government has to have some safeguards at the end of the day so that entrepreneurs are not willy-nilly moving money around from one corporate structure to another and not using the money for what it's intended. But the message I'm getting fairly clearly is that unless you're big, unless you've got a lot of people that have got a lot of time to go through all of the processes that government has said is in place, it gets pretty difficult for them to get access to that capital. So one of the things that I think we need to have—we all agree, research and development is the key—is something that's fairly straightforward and simple, and it might be as simple as being able to defer their corporate taxes from year to year, because part of the problem is that you make quarterly instalments on your corporate tax based on last year's profit, and this year, for example, a lot of places that I'm talking to aren't going to make the kind of money they did last year. They'll all end up with huge credits at the end of the year, so now they've got a bit of a cash flow problem. We need to look at issues like that, about how we're able to deal in real time with how taxes are filed and how we basically organize our taxes so that those who can afford to, pay them, and those who can't, pay what they're supposed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: The Minister of Research and Innovation, with Bill 100, Ideas for the Future, makes a very compelling case for why this legislation needs to be passed. I note Saturday's Peterborough Examiner talking about a company that might take advantage of this:

"GE Energy Motors Division, Peterborough, large motors and generators manufactures engineered-to-order AC and DC motors for a variety of industrial applications including petrochemical production, mining, steel mills and air separation. Motors up to 65,000 HP and generators up to 32,000 kW have been designed and built at this site. We are a world leader in providing high value, custom, large motor solutions, leveraging premium technology and quality. This is a Canadian custom design and manufacturing facility with a global product mandate."

We talk about the health of the manufacturing sector. It goes on to say that right here in Peterborough, they want to embark on a massive hiring of quality specialists, supervisors, engineers, project managers, electrical systems and control engineers, electrical/mechanical technicians and technologists, mechanical/electrical engineers, materials managers, and hourly rated positions for fitter/welders, millwrights and industrial electricians.

This is the kind of innovative manufacturing that will produce the new jobs and continue to expand our manufacturing in areas where Ontario can have this com-

petitive advantage. The minister, quite rightly, says that if we put this bill in place, these new, bright ideas will produce the new jobs in the manufacturing sector that we all recognize as being under some real stress these days.

Also, I must put in a plug for Jim Balsillie, born and raised in Peterborough, went to PCVS high school, and then on to the University of Waterloo. He's the famous partner in Research in Motion. He's one of Peterborough's proudest citizens, and we wish him well in the future as he continues to provide jobs here in Ontario and Canada.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: Looking at the minister's response, I would like to be on the record as saying we're supportive of the idea and the concept behind the innovation. In fact, the commercialization issue at the university level was an issue for our government. It was an initiative of our government to encourage the partnership in making an idea into a concept, into a product. This takes it one step further, which is encouraging.

The member for Peterborough just mentioned—as I said in my previous remarks, the problem here is the red tape component. You, as the minister, have a role in that to say whether or not they qualify, but as outlined by the member for Peterborough, GE would not qualify.

It says here in the regulations—I'm referring to subsection (2):

"Qualifying corporation....

"1. It was incorporated ... after March 24, 2008 and before ... 2012...."

It also goes on further in section 57 to say that corporations that partnered with or were a part of or if the person who held the patent was part of that corporation in any form, they wouldn't qualify, not even if a professor was sharing it as part of a research project with GE or some other company and then formed another commercial product company. They wouldn't qualify.

That's the problem with this. It's stifling innovation. That's the real problem here. They should be putting more money into R&D, and if they go commercial, give them full credit. Most companies, as you know, Minister, fail in their first five years—the majority, 80%. So in fact, this sounds good, but it doesn't pass the sniff test. Like all things the Liberals promise, it sounds good, we're supportive of it, but at the end of the day, the recipients of this will be few.

I think there should be a requirement to report annually how many applied, how many were rejected. Those kinds of measurements and accountability are missing, and I would encourage you to—

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you to the honourable member.

The Minister of Research and Innovation has two minutes to respond.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my friends from Oshawa, Timmins—James Bay, Peterborough and Durham for entering the debate on my comments.

First of all, I would like to say that it is so very important, as a government in the 21st century, to understand the simple equation I mentioned earlier that we have to build an economy that is not based on the fact that oil is going back to \$30, that the dollar is going down to 62 cents and that the American economy is going to boom tomorrow. If that is your idea of how to build success over the next few years, I would say, with all due respect, you have to give your head a shake.

What we are talking about in this government is the need for us to be nimble, to be swift and to succeed in the 21st-century economy, and that will be driven by the process of innovation. My friend from Durham talked about commercialization, which I think has been loosely defined as tech transfer, and most of our major institutions have tech transfer offices. But we've learned, through the Ontario innovation agenda, that it is a two-way street; that we also have to have industrial pull. I would say that industry now has an even greater incentive to be looking for those solutions that are on the shelves of our research labs and on the lab benches, and how we need to translate those into the economy right here.

The question, fundamentally, is that these great ideas will be commercialized. This answers the question of where, and what we're saying in this bill is sending a very clear signal that we believe it's Ontario. I'm glad—and I think all parties will support me and the Minister of Finance in this—that the best place to do that is right here in Ontario. That's why I'm hoping we will pass Bill 100. It's important that we do that, I would be so bold as to say, in this session. The sooner we get to this, the better. I want to thank the Minister of Finance for supporting our ministry and bringing forward this very important bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Bill 100, entitled the Ideas for the Future Act, 2008, is more aptly titled the “red tape for future generations act.” I think this piece of legislation is another one of those good ideas but a huge missed opportunity. Businesses in Ontario need our help now, not in 2011. They need their government to work with them, to keep jobs here in Ontario now. What they do not need is to spend additional hours and wages filling out paperwork when they need to be out securing new businesses.

The 10-year tax exemption for new corporations is no real tax exemption at all. As my colleague clearly pointed out, it's a refund buried behind a mound of paperwork. But before businesses begin to get too excited about this tax refund, let's be clear: This special enhancement is only available to new businesses, not businesses that have been weighed down by oppressive taxes and regulations in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario. No, those companies who have been paying their dues and supporting our communities will not—will not—be eligible for assistance. This job-creating tax refund will only be made available to new businesses, and in very specific sectors that the government has, in its own wisdom, deemed to be priorities.

Perhaps it is the fact that, as Progressive Conservatives, our party places a great deal of faith in the private sector's ability to decide what has the greatest growth potential. The McGuinty government, however, has seen fit to further restrict this tax refund in four eligible fields: first, advanced health technology; second, bioeconomy; third, telecommunications; and lastly, computer or digital technology production.

I do not disagree that these four areas will be of increasing importance to Ontario's economy as we move forward in a highly competitive global marketplace. Perhaps Minister Papatello will bring back work for these new start-up companies from her Saudi Arabia sojourn. Only time will tell. Not only has Minister Duncan limited eligible businesses to new companies and in these four select categories, but he has also restricted it even further. The tax refund is only available to businesses that bring to market intellectual property whose concept was developed at qualifying institutions. It's really unfortunate that the bill is so narrowly defined and that it helps just a tiny segment of our business community. In actuality, it would only contribute to about 2% of jobs in Ontario during this very challenging economic time.

This bill lists more ineligible than eligible companies and entities, and lists them in a way that makes it difficult for even eligible organizations to participate. Mountains and mountains of paperwork need to be completed, which perhaps may take the entire eligibility time of this initiative to do. While the McGuinty government has very clear restrictions on the applicant, there are no guaranteed timelines for approvals or for refunds. I think that Bill 100 offers more discouragement than encouragement.

It will also cost these organizations a considerable amount of money to go through the application process. It's been proven in other parts of Canada and in other parts of the world that this type of process is cost ineffective. It costs the organizations a lot of money to hire additional staff just to go through this cumbersome process.

I think we had an opportunity here to allow not just new organizations and not just public organizations to participate, but existing corporations that have a proven track record of stimulating jobs in our great province. We should be developing legislation that rewards this hard work, rewards initiative and rewards investment in our province's future. Premier McGuinty would know that, if he bothered to take an interest in this. In fact, the Premier just came back from an economic summit in Niagara-on-the-Lake with leaders from across Canada. Surely, between photo ops, one of them asked the Premier what his plan is for turning our province around. It's embarrassing to watch our proud province dragged through the mud and go from first to worst in economic performance.

My caucus colleagues and I, led by John Tory, could not wait any longer for Mr. McGuinty to hold his own economic summit. We took the initiative and held our own economic summit, where we brought together great

minds of business and the academic community to brainstorm ideas and share perspectives. We will gladly share this information with the Premier, as we want to see our economy turn around again.

We know we can't wait till 2011 to fix this problem. We need to start now, or Bob Rae is going to look like an economic genius in comparison to Dalton McGuinty. Already, Premier McGuinty has created one new government job in Ontario for every new job created in the private sector. This is an unbelievably poor understanding of basic economic principles.

The McGuinty government is great at telling us how terrible the loss of manufacturing jobs is and how hard they're working to retrain these workers and find them new jobs. They're great at telling us they are focused on our economy, and then they insult three quarters of existing businesses that are struggling to survive by throwing out an olive branch just to new companies. Telling us is not action; it's simply wasting our time with more words. I will be happy to share with this government some of the suggestions that arose during the economic round table, in the hope that they will not fall on deaf ears.

Over 90% of businesses surveyed believe that the Ontario government should set clear numerical targets for the reduction of fees, forms and regulations on small businesses. Since 2003, the McGuinty government has eliminated 81 regulations. That's great. But they have created 435 new regulations.. It is time to start listening to the people who create jobs, not just government jobs but private sector jobs.

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During our economic summit, there was a general consensus that we need to support our entrepreneurial culture. Alex Gill, executive director of the Ontario Environmental Industry Association, said: "The province has focused considerable resources on the earlier stages of innovation, namely supporting university researchers and helping them 'commercialize' their ideas." That is fine, but there is a gap further down the chain where companies are trying to grow beyond their initial stages, and that is often where they run into problems. It is time that Premier McGuinty started listening to the stakeholders in this province responsible for job creation. We are not expecting government to have all of the answers. In fact, the opposite is true. We want government to get out of the way of the private sector so they can do what they do best: Identify a niche area in the market and build business to meet that need. Businesses need research and development funding for their intellectual property outside of that academic environment. Premier McGuinty has rules for some and rules for others. It's okay to give General Motors R&D money, and new companies starting up will be eligible for this great new tax refund, but our small business community, the people who feel the slightest economic movement harder than most, will not get a lick of help from Premier McGuinty.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business conducted a survey on what businesses would spend their savings on if the cost of regulations were to be reduced.

Here are the results: 54% of businesses surveyed said they would invest in equipment or expansion planning, 28% would hire additional employees, and 11% would decrease prices. If the government got out of the business of complicating the efforts of the private sector, it appears that businesses could implement their own economic stimulus package without a dime from the province. I would encourage the government to pick up a copy of this Canadian Federation of Independent Business periodical entitled growing Ontario small businesses: the red tape factor. It leaves you without any doubt about how regressive your tax strategies are in this province.

For example, the tax compliance burden on small businesses who employ between zero to four people is approximately \$3,700. Well, that \$3,700 per employee is a job killer; that's plain and simple. If they have four employees, that adds up to \$14,800. That is significant money that could be reinvested in their business and in the economy of our province. Sixty-five per cent of those businesses that were surveyed in the CFIB study listed the amount of paperwork as a factor contributing to tax compliance costs—the paperwork.

I could go on and on about the tax burden weighing down our businesses, but I have a limited time frame in which to respond, and to me the answer is clear as day: If we want to help our businesses grow and expand, if we really want our economy to rebound, then we need the McGuinty government to step up to the plate and reduce the tax burden on our business community. The Premier has the gall to implement a fairness-to-Ontarians bill. But is it fair to businesses across all sectors of the economy to wave a tax refund that they don't really qualify for under their noses? Is it fair that the only intellectual property that the McGuinty government recognizes comes from universities, colleges, non-profits or hospitals? Has the government thought out or, better yet, costed out, how much the compliance costs will be for businesses hoping to qualify and how many staff will be needed to administer and interpret Bill 100? I hope that Bill 100 is not simply another job creation program for the public sector, because I don't think that the private sector can stomach much more of this. Will the government commit to reducing the paper burden by making compliance online?

If the McGuinty government is unsure of how to proceed with cutting red tape in any way, I strongly urge them to review the great work undertaken by the Red Tape Commission under Premier Harris. Our party is very good at cutting red tape. We cut through the nonsense and allow the private sector the room and latitude to do what they do best, and that is to grow and prosper in our economy.

Like in the famous children's story *The Emperor's New Clothes*, the benefits of this bill are invisible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and/or comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just find it interesting, in this time of financial meltdown, that we still have the

Conservatives talking about having to open up the market and let 'er rip. It seems to me that I would be a little bit more cautious if I was in a party to the right, either being a Liberal or Conservative, making that argument. We all understand that we need to make sure that the process of filing your taxes and whatever programs are available by government need to be done in some way that is easy to access. Nobody argues that point; that's a bit of a no-brainer. But it's interesting, it would appear that the Conservatives are having a problem shifting gears here. Clearly, what you're seeing in the United States and in Europe with all kinds of right-wing leaders is that they're in trouble economically and are trying to figure out how to put the cat back in the bag, as you might say, and trying to fix some of the mess that has been caused by some of the excessive practices of the banking sector, mortgage brokers, Wall Street and various stock markets around the world.

Certainly, the answer at the end of the day is not to say, "Let's continue down the road of deregulation. Let's continue cutting red tape." God, even McCain is not arguing for that. So if you're to the right of McCain and you're to the right of Bush, I don't know where that leaves you, quite frankly. I just wonder about that.

I'm going to get a chance a little bit later to speak to this in some detail, but the point I want to make is that I understand the fundamental argument you make from the Conservative side of the benches, that we need to make sure that business can access things easily, but I'm not so sure "let 'er rip" is a good answer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Reza Moridi: It is my pleasure to rise in this House and to speak about Bill 100, the Ideas for the Future Act. This bill is a part of our government's five-point economic plan.

As we all know, our economy is facing major challenges at this point. The lower Canadian dollar, higher oil prices and challenges that the American economy is facing are imposing extremely important challenges to our economy.

This bill is going to pave the way for a knowledge-based economy. As we all know, the economy of the 21st century is and will be based on knowledge. So the importance of this bill is that it's going to pave the way; it's going to facilitate the commercialization of research ideas and innovation in Ontario, the ideas created in any Canadian university research institution and the colleges.

I just want to make a comment on the point that the honourable member from Nickel Belt mentioned. Once this bill is passed, it's going to not only facilitate the commercialization of research in Ontario, it's also going to assist the development of basic and fundamental science in Canadian universities. In the history of science, many scientific ideas and research were just left in books and libraries and never came into commercialization. So once this bill is passed, it's going to pave the way for expansion of research innovations and also fundamental research in our universities.

I just want to mention the importance of science in the economy. The federal government, unfortunately, under our current Prime Minister, dissolved the Office of the National Science Adviser. We still need to have the office in our federal government. The next government, hopefully, will create that office to help our science and innovation and also the economy.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I just want to make a brief comment with regard to the member for Timmins-James Bay, who says Conservatives are for "let 'er rip." Nothing could be further from the truth, but this is what the left tries to portray. We are a prudent party that wants individual businesses to flourish and create wealth in our province. What we don't want is useless regulation which binds businesses' hands so they can't compete in the world today. I believe we had greater consumer protection when we were in government than we have at the present time. What we did at that time was make sure that our securities commission was being strengthened under David Brown, who was then the chairman, and we continued to push with regard to that.

When we talk about doing away with useless regulation and redefining regulation, we want to create opportunity with regulation. We don't want to confine opportunity. We have been hammering the government day after day about things like the regulation of our apprenticeship ratios. This government requires three journeymen for every apprentice, whereas in Alberta, it's one-to-one in commercial construction, and you can have two apprentices for every journeyman on residential construction. They're trying to encourage their young people to get the training on the job, whereas we are saying to young people who want to be an apprentice here in the province of Ontario, "You can go through the courses going up to become an apprentice, but God help you when you go out to the electrical contractor and try to get an apprenticeship position. It's not there."

We're for sound, reasonable, logical regulation. These guys—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further questions or comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: Bill 100 is a bill that incents entrepreneurship; it incents ideas. In Ontario, we have some of the best and brightest people developing new ideas, especially in the area of the new green economy. There's incredible potential for next-generation jobs, but they need a helping hand. These businesses that are established on the basis of these new ideas will be able to create all kinds of jobs that are part of this global trend that we need in order to stay competitive. This is a way whereby our government is partnering with the entrepreneurs, with the innovative thinkers in our universities and colleges, so that we can not only create products that are benign environmentally, but products that will employ a lot of Canadians and Ontarians. We need to do this more than ever, because the fact is, we are in very

uncharted waters right now. We can see what's happening. It's not only happening in Ireland, which was the Irish miracle—they're in a severe recession in Ireland. France has just declared themselves in a recession.

I don't want to sound doom and gloom but there is a global shakedown happening, so we need to be prepared. We need to acknowledge that government has to take some steps. This is a positive step that our government is taking to basically encourage and partner with innovation and with one of the greatest strengths we have in our society, and that is our learning environment. We do have the best, whether it's the University of Waterloo, the University of Western Ontario or the University of Toronto. We've got people. All they need is a bit of partnership from government. I think this bill tries to do that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Burlington has up to two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I want to thank the members for Timmins—James Bay, Richmond Hill, Carleton—Mississippi Mills and Eglinton—Lawrence for their comments.

I think what is pivotal here is that we have yet another initiative that is unclear. It leaves out the private sector, it leaves out existing businesses and it creates more red tape. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business, in their study, estimated that the total red tape burden costs Ontario some \$13 billion a year. That's about equal to the amount of money the province will spend on public education this year, and this bill adds yet more red tape to that burden. Business people are spending an increasingly larger amount of time filling out paperwork instead of growing their businesses or hiring more employees.

Unnecessary or outdated regulations are far from being a bygone in this frustrating environment that creativity needs to excel in. It's unfortunate—and I'm going to say again that it's an opportunity missed—that the government hasn't costed out and done a run to see how this legislation plays out in the real world. This is all theory, and theory sometimes doesn't play out. I think you need to talk to the people who deal in business every single day, who try to keep this province prosperous, who try to keep people engaged in employment and who try to pay their taxes to keep our province proud and great. I think we're falling further and further behind with Bill 100.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm going to be sharing my time in this rotation with the member from Nickel Belt.

I just want to take a few minutes to put something on the record. This is a debate that, quite frankly, I think we should have had some time ago in this province. Really, the point I want to make is that when you look at Ontario, compared to the industrialized nations, we lag far behind most other countries when it comes to our efforts on the part of both labour and industry and business to look at mechanisms to encourage research and development investments within our manufacturing sector and others.

It always astounds me, when I look at the numbers. Look at a country like Holland. Holland does more, when it comes to value added, and more when it comes to research and development with wood products, than we do here in Ontario. We are among the largest producers of wood products in Canada. This country is second to none.

This is not to say that it's this government's fault or that government's fault or our government's fault when we were there. My point is that Ontario was rather lucky for many, many years. Everything came naturally. There were a few things that we did at the very beginning in order to encourage our economy, and we basically developed an economy that was manufacturing based and also natural resource based. We tied that all together with good, sound public policy around cheap electricity rates etc, our proximity to the American border and our Canadian health care system, which helped cut the cost to employers not having to pay health care premiums as they do in the United States.

My point is that we had it really good for a long time. If you look at the employment numbers in Ontario through the 1960s, the 1970s and, I would even argue, the 1980s, through the time of the recession, we had it pretty well. We sort of had everything going for us. Because of that, I think governments in the past didn't do the kinds of investments that needed to be made, when it comes to public policy, to really be serious about how we encourage research and development in this province so that we can be cutting edge and ahead of others when it comes to competing for the products that people want.

Now, I'm not going to say that none of it has been done. You just need to take a look at RIM. Certainly some of it has been done and, yes, it has been innovation on the part of entrepreneurs and, yes, a partnership with the community colleges and, yes, a partnership with our provincial and federal governments. But my point is that those things have been incubated not necessarily because governments, either provincial or federal, have done things to increase investment in research and development.

So here we are, at a bit of a crossroads in our economy. Certainly I look at my colleague, the member from Manitoulin—Algoma—Manitoulin?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Algoma—Manitoulin.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I ought to put Kapuskasing at the end of it; that's a big, big one.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: No, no. Algoma—Manitoulin.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: He understands as well as I do that we've gone through a massive downturn in the forestry sector. One of the things that I think chagrins us all at this point is that we never positioned that industry to go toward value added. We value add to a degree. We're not going to argue for a second that making paper is not value added, and we're not going to argue that making dimensional lumber isn't value added, but what about all the other sub-products that can come out of it? There have been some efforts, on the part of some entrepreneurs in Ontario and on the part of governments—by

and large here and there, but not in a real way—to look at what Ontario can do when it comes to positioning our forestry sector so that we can not only be the ones who harvest the logs, bring them into the mills and turn them into dimensional lumber, kraft or paper. But what can we really do in order to add value? Can we build window sashes, desks, hardwood floors? Can we do whatever we can do to increase opportunities from our own natural resources?

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I go back to my first point: Go back and look at the numbers. European nations are far ahead of Ontario, and Canada in general. This is not pointing the finger at only this government. The finger pointing can go all around. We had it so well for so long. European nations, because they didn't have the natural resources and some of the natural things that were happening in the Ontario economy, said, "All right, how can we position into the export markets?" They said, "We are going to have a policy where we use all the levers of government—training, tax credits, low-interest loans, you name it—in order to position our entrepreneurs to be able to take risks," and in order to develop what ended up becoming very strong, value-added industry and manufacturing sectors in places like Scandinavian countries, Holland, Germany and others.

We're at a crossroads in this province. We find ourselves in a situation where the fundamentals that allowed the Ontario economy to prosper for so many years are starting to be shaken. It is a whole conglomerate of things. Yes, the American dollar and the Canadian dollar are part of that. I understand that well. Being in a resource sector riding, where we have mining and forestry, we're very dependent on the exchange rate between the Canadian and American dollar. But there's a whole bunch of other things that have been eroded. Our cheap electricity that we had when we used to have a public utility that provided electricity at cost to our manufacturers and the people in the resource sector—in my riding, it's more than double what it used to be, and that's not even taking into account the inflation that would have normally happened.

The point is that I represent a riding where some of the largest customers of Ontario Hydro reside, and you have some in your own riding, with the pulp and paper mill in Espanola. It is very, very difficult for them to stay afloat. Some of them have gone down. Even with the programs that have been announced to date to try to offset the increases in the hydro costs that the Conservatives and then the Liberals perpetuated by way of partial privatization and deregulation of our hydro system, it is very difficult for them to stay afloat.

Some of the fundamentals that underpin the Ontario economy have been eroded. Electricity rates. We've not done well when it comes to positioning ourselves to what future markets could be. Our training initiatives certainly have not kept up to date with—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, I could do that. It's a good idea. If you're running as a leader, you can do that.

Ah, c'est l'École L'Héritage de St. Catharines. Comment ça va, vous autres? There we go. Votre ami M. Bradley m'a fait noter qu'on a des étudiants de St. Catharines, où demeure même ma tante. Monsieur Bradley, vous avez besoin de savoir que ma tante vous aime bien, mais c'est son neveu qu'elle aime encore plus. Mais c'est toute une autre question.

I just say—oh, you're back in time. Good for you. I can't give you the floor from here.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I know.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Sorry about that. The rules of the Legislature, right? We have all these arcane rules.

But my point—and I don't want to take up too much time, because I know Madame Gélinas has lots to say—is that the underpinning of what was our economy has changed. What we are now trying to do, this late in the game, is fix that by introducing measures here and there that may work in the end. Will this bill be a bad thing? Obviously not. Will this bill do some good? Of course it will.

The government says, "This is part of a five-point plan." I get real nervous when I hear governments talking about five-point plans, because that normally means they're trying to react because there isn't a plan. I know; I was in the Rae government when we had a three-point plan. It didn't work for us, and I don't think it's going to work for you guys. Then I heard the Mike Harris government and the Eves government talk about—how many points were in your plans? I can't remember what the numbers were. So normally, it's a communications exercise and not a policy exercise.

What we need to do in this Legislature is challenge ourselves as members of this assembly, all sides of the House, to say: How do we need to rethink what natural advantages we can give our entrepreneurs to enable them to survive and invest and do the value-added and R&D that has to happen? What tools in government do we have that allow us to help make that happen? I think we know what some of those keys are, but I don't think we're doing them as well as we need to.

I end on this point: I listened intently to the right-wing parties making arguments about, "It's all about red tape and it's about reducing taxes and it's about getting out of the way of business so that business can do its own thing." Go tell that to the people who have lost their houses because of exactly that kind of practice in the United States and that somewhat is happening in Canada. We've allowed, quite frankly, mortgage brokers and banks and others to basically do that. The government said—and it was Mr. Bush, I remind people, contrary to what some people—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Let's not go there. You're baiting me now, Mr. Brown; you're baiting me.

I just say that that experiment has been tried. It started with Reagan, Thatcher and eventually Mr. Mulroney, this whole idea of, "If only government can get out of the way, business can do it better." We see that, yes, some things are better for some. We take a look at the big

buyouts and bonuses of people at large corporations who have taken a lot of money out of those companies that could have been used for R&D investment and for the training that needs to be done. I don't argue, as a social democrat, for one second that we should impose new taxes on these companies and we should make life difficult for them, but on the other hand I certainly don't agree that we need to get out of the way. I think it's a question of building partnerships. If social democrats have learned something around the world, if you look at Scandinavian countries and others, it's that you build—

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Russia.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Russia is social democrats—they're Communists. Give me a break. You don't even know the political system. My God. Boy, oh boy; what a guy. The Conservatives—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: He's baiting me. Let's not go there.

My point is, social democratic governments out there have understood that it is really about building the partnerships that are necessary. It's about bringing all the players to the table, not just giving it a good effort by saying a couple of nice speeches here and there. Put labour at the table; put the communities at the table with business; put government at the table. Try to do things that need to be done with specifics of what's going on within that company, because there isn't a one-size-fits-all approach to this. That, I think, is one of the weaknesses of this bill: We're really trying to put an emphasis on four or five sectors where, quite frankly, there may be emerging sectors that will be forgotten by way of this bill.

I want to thank you for the time in this debate. I want to say encore, à l'École L'Héritage de St. Catharines, bienvenue à notre Assemblée législative. Prochainement, vous allez entendre M^{me} Gélinas, une autre francophone, de Nickel Belt. Bonjour.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? The honourable member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Moi aussi, j'aimerais souhaiter la bienvenue aux étudiants de St. Catharines. Bienvenue à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario. Ça me fait plaisir de vous rencontrer.

Le débat d'aujourd'hui est sur un projet de loi qui s'appelle Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'imposition des sociétés et la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts. Nous, on l'appelle le projet de loi 100. Du côté de mon parti—je représente le Nouveau Parti démocratique—nous allons appuyer le projet de loi, mais on n'est pas parfaitement d'accord avec tout ce qu'il y a dans le projet de loi. Je vais vous expliquer pourquoi on n'est pas tout à fait d'accord.

Dans un premier temps, according to the Ministry of Finance, this proposal will cost \$5 million in its first year and \$7 million in its second year. The cost can also be thought of as a program or initiative that is being put on the sidelines by the expenditures. One initiative that is being sidelined by the government's so-called innovation

agenda is basic research. For those unfamiliar with the term "basic research," to quote one definition, it is "a scientific study done to create new knowledge for the purpose of learning or finding truth." Basic research does not have an immediate commercial application but basic research is the starting point for commercialization.

Here's what Mike Lazaridis, the founder of Research in Motion, whose little BlackBerry everybody loves, says about basic research: "The number one reason to fund basic research well and with vision is to attract the very best researchers from around the world to Ontario. Once here, they can prepare Canada's next generations of graduates, master's, Ph.D. and post-doctoral students, including the finest foreign students." Everything "else flows from this."

He went on to say that commercialization will happen. Canadian researchers will use the high-quality education, well-funded laboratories and their international contacts to design commercial applications for their discoveries. But that is a natural progression and it does not need to be forced.

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This province is putting a significant amount of resources into its commercialization plan. It has put over \$1 billion on the table, telling researchers that they will be rewarded for finding commercial applications for their findings. This is money that could and should go to basic research. We must ask ourselves what discoveries we are sacrificing by diverting funds away from basic research. The province is desperately trying to do something to create a new Research in Motion, but that's not the way new companies start. It begins with smart people working in high-class institutions with top-notch professors seeking answers to questions they may not have fully developed. Ontario universities have produced incredible and world-changing discoveries. Six Nobel Prize winners were educated or worked at the University of Toronto, right here. Two of those were Frederick Banting and Mr. J. R. Macleod, for their discovery of insulin in 1920. I might add that one of Mr. Banting's grandchildren lives in my riding. This discovery didn't require a patchwork of tax breaks and refunds. It was simply a commitment to basic research, to looking for new truths.

We agree with stakeholders like the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations that the province needs to focus on and fund basic research. This means hiring more professors and increasing support for graduate students. To quote several Australian scientists on their government's similar commercialization agenda, from the publication *Nature*, "Good scientific research is not done by corporations, or by the strategic teams beloved of politicians and administrators, but through ideas which develop in the minds of individual scientists." That is one problem.

There is a second serious problem with the bill and its effectiveness when implemented. Here's what Mr. Duncan said about the bill:

"This bill is meant to attract individuals with great ideas from all across Canada to set up their businesses" right here in Ontario.

"It would help launch the next wave of Ontario's innovators by helping companies keep more of their income to invest and grow. It would also reinforce the critical role that universities and other public research institutes play in our economy and the next generation of jobs."

Well, those are all very nice words and I wish they could come true, but perhaps the minister didn't talk to those in the business who might actually benefit from a program like that. In the New Democratic Party, we did, and here's what we heard; I'll fill you in on the details.

Several industries that represent different companies that invest in the commercialization of research say that it takes years—and they're talking eight to 10 years—for companies that commercialize research in the advanced health and biotechnology sectors to become profitable. That means they don't actually pay corporate income tax, so a refund on zero tax means zero refund. That doesn't give them a whole lot of extra dollars to reinvest in their business.

Why would the minister introduce a 10-year tax refund bill that won't actually help commercialize research? It sounds like a low-cost program to me, because, after all, the minister hasn't been able to table the actual costs of the proposal. The tax breaks aren't used, so it's not going to cost the province a whole lot. In challenging times like these, when Ontarians are looking to the province to introduce new job creation opportunities in high-growth, high-wage areas, we need more than a lot of nice talk that is not going to lead to new, good-paying jobs.

So the minister can come out with a bill and say it will create jobs, but we don't think it will. Those closest to commercializing research say that there will be little take-up on the program. New companies involved in these sectors simply aren't profitable for 10 years to take advantage of this program.

Those who invest in new companies commercializing research don't see the tax structure as a problem; rather, they point to a lack of capital funds. The venture capital market has never recovered since the meltdown of 2000-01. Some funds have simply stopped trying to raise capital because of the total lack of interest. The province's response to this crisis has not been to invest more in venture capital. It has been this new gimmick of a tax credit which is not going to be that helpful.

There is also talk about eliminating the 15% tax credit for labour-sponsored investment funds by the end of 2010. Labour-sponsored investment funds are pools of venture capital flowing to companies commercializing research in the advanced health technology and biotech sectors. By cutting the credit, the government is signalling that it doesn't want every Ontarian to invest in those small start-ups.

Sure, the NDP will support it. The government has decided to put commercialization before real high-tech growth policy. That's unfortunate because the industry has put real proposals on the table, but those real proposals have been ignored. Instead we get a tax credit gimmick.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and/or comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: I just want to comment on the comments from the member for Timmins-James Bay. I think what he is talking about is critically important, and it deals with this bill. There needs to be a paradigm shift here, I'm thinking. If there was some kind of meltdown in 2001, I don't know what you'd call what's going on today on Wall Street and Bay Street. The reality is that we really have to change our whole approach in many of these areas, and that's why—there was a venture capital fund, the labour fund, it was called; it wasn't working. Everybody in venture capital said the fund—so that's been replaced by different investments our government has made, the Next Generation of Jobs Fund etc. It's really unprecedented, what we are going through here. That's why this kind of innovative approach in Bill 100 is part of this new approach. Whether it is the auto industry, high-tech, biotech or agriculture, yesterday's axioms and bromides don't work.

The member for Timmins-James Bay talked about the deregulation mania of Bush, McCain and company. You've seen what it's done. It's rewarded the fat cats on Wall Street who walked away with \$489 million in golden parachutes, and people are losing their homes. People are losing their pensions, their life savings because of the cowboy capitalism that's dominated the west for too long. Our government is saying yes, capitalism is good, but it can't go unregulated. The Harper, McCain and Bush cowboy capitalism is no good for Main Street.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to rise to comment on the points from Timmins-James Bay and Nickel Belt. I also think that when we talk about trying as a government to target specific sectors, we're not going to win. There are particular sectors across Ontario that are exempted and will not be able to tap into Bill 100: auto, manufacturing, forestry, mining and agriculture. It's almost as though the Liberal government has chosen the sectors across Ontario that are being hurt the most and is saying, "Here's how we're going to encourage innovation, but you can't apply."

Today, we had the Minister of Agriculture rise to mark Ontario Agriculture Week, and she crowed about the Premier's innovation award. Somehow the Liberals can live with the dichotomy of handing out innovation awards to individuals who have innovative ideas and are doing innovative things on their farms, and yet they can't qualify under Bill 100. I don't understand how you could cherry-pick the industries that in Ontario are struggling so desperately right now, and say, "You will not be able to qualify." It's quite a slap, actually, to the researchers and students at the University of Guelph who have been responsible for so much of the innovation that we've seen in the agricultural sector in the last number of years. It's unfortunate that they have chosen, with Bill 100, to pull away certain sectors that are in such desperate need of some encouragement and some creativity from our

provincial government, and to say, "You cannot qualify for this."

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments? Seeing none, the honourable member from Nickel Belt has up to two minutes to respond.

M^{me} France G  linas: I'd like to thank the honourable member from Eglinton-Lawrence for his comments. I agree that the labour-sponsored investment funds did not work as well as they had been planned to do, but they have been used by basic research and they have provided capital funds in an area that has a really difficult time finding capital to fund basic research. So to send it away because it had trouble—it might have been worth a second look.

As far as the cowboy capitalism comments, I will let this one slide, as I don't think it has that much to do with the bill. I would also like to thank the honourable member from Dufferin-Caledon. She is absolutely right. The bill is specifically for two target areas in health care and it basically could have some potential in other areas of research, and she certainly mentioned a few, such as auto and agriculture, but those have been explicitly excluded. A bill that could have potential to do some good is targeted at an industry that takes more than eight to 10 years to be profitable; it is targeted at the commercial end of research, when basic research is what needs to be funded; and it is limited in its scope as to who can address it. So let's just call it a very low piece of legislation that will do very little to help the 240,000 people who lost their jobs in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you for your contribution to the debate. Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased today to be able to speak in support of Bill 100, the Ideas for the Future Act, which is designed to attract individuals to bring forward great new ideas based on research in Ontario and across Canada, and turn that into innovative high-tech jobs for Ontario. What we're talking about is giving people the incentive to make that step from basic research through applied research and into commercialization.

I want to begin by commenting a little bit on some of the previous comments, because having spent my life in a university town, I understand totally the importance of basic research. We do wonderful basic research here in Ontario. In particular, we do wonderful basic research in a number of fields at the University of Guelph. Obviously, agriculture is the one that we are quite well known for, but in the physical and biological sciences as well. A whole host of wonderful basic research happens and some very interesting applied research happens, but where we fall down is on that link of getting from the applied research idea to the actual commercialization, to the plant that is creating jobs and producing product. That's what we want to support with this bill.

With all respect to RIM, I'm like everybody else—I've got my BlackBerry here; I use it all the time. It's sort

of joined at the hip, literally. But one of the things, when you're dealing with digital technologies is that a lot of the value in this particular machine is intellectual capacity, and intellectual capacity, in some ways, is easier to commercialize. When you move to a lot of the other areas, you're actually in commercialization, having to move to producing a physical product. Getting to producing a physical product is a whole lot more complicated, in some ways, than in software, and I've got some background in both of these areas. So there are some differences here.

What Bill 100 would specifically do is provide that new companies that commercialize research that has taken place in a recognized Canadian research institution—it could be a college, it could be a university, it could be a research institute—usually based on public funding of the research, would get a 10-year tax break. That's what this specific bill is all about.

I think, however, it's worth noting that as part of our five-point plan, which has a focus on investing in innovation, this isn't the only thing we're doing. Listening to many of the comments from the opposition parties here today, you would think that perhaps this is the only approach that we're taking. This is one of many pieces of our strategy to invest in innovation. For example, in our 2008 budget we actually had a total investment of almost \$300 million to support new investments, proposed tax initiatives and a variety of things. Let me tell you about some of those other initiatives so that you can get a sense that there are a number of things we're doing here.

The innovation demonstration fund provides financial support of up to 50% of eligible costs to help Ontario companies with the commercialization and initial demonstration of their innovative technologies.

The Next Generation of Jobs Fund actually has three streams within that program. The first is a jobs and investment program which is designed to help companies in a range of sectors to expand in Ontario and develop innovative products for global markets. There you can get up to 15% of eligible project costs in grants. The second component of the Next Generation of Jobs Fund is specifically targeted at the biopharmaceutical investment program, and it supports the expansion of research and advanced manufacturing by pharmaceutical and biotech firms—up to 20% of eligible costs. The third component of the Next Generation of Jobs Fund is called the strategic opportunities program. It supports industry-led public-private collaborations focused on increasing Ontario's innovation expertise in the bioeconomy and clean technologies, advanced health technologies, and creative industries—again, up to 25% of eligible program costs.

In addition to that, there's the Ontario research commercialization program, which provides grants ranging from \$100,000 to \$750,000 a year for up to three years. This helps fund Ontario research institutions and not-for-profit organizations with technology transfers, with research transfers.

So there are certainly a number of things going on in Ontario, but Bill 100 is specifically focused on encourag-

ing people from all over Canada to come here and invest in Ontario and to give companies that take that research and start up new companies a 10-year tax break if they carry through on this investment.

I want to tell you about a marvellous event that I was at on Friday afternoon in Guelph with the Honourable Leona Dombrowsky, our Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, because it was just the sort of enterprise that I see this sort of a grant, if this legislation is passed, actually helping along. We were celebrating the opening of something called the Bioproducts Discovery and Development Centre at the University of Guelph, specifically focused on taking research that has happened in agriculture and in biology—pure research, applied research—and pulling that to the next step, not into just agricultural research or biological research, but actually pulling it into bioproducts discovery and production, and taking it that extra step.

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It is supported by the province of Ontario. Dr. Amar Mohanty, who is the director of the bioproducts discovery centre, is supported by a Premier's research chair in biomaterials and transportation.

This was a really exciting project, from my point of view, because what Dr. Mohanty and his research colleagues are doing is taking what he described as waste products and underutilized products from the agriculture industry—but also from the forestry industry; there are a lot of unused wood chips—and taking those by-products of other things that are going on, growing soybeans, growing corn, growing wheat, the parts that don't actually become food, and looking at those by-products and saying, "What can we do with those things to turn them into bioproducts?"

It happens that Dr. Mohanty is actually not a biologist, he's not an agriculturist; he's actually a chemical engineer. So what he's doing is marrying the expertise that already exists with the University of Guelph with his knowledge of chemical engineering. At the moment, they're actually focusing on—plastic substitutes, I guess, is what you would call them—products which could be a replacement for plastics. They have in fact already developed products made out of soy meal that are a substitute for plastics, and products that are made out of a variety of other combinations of bioproducts that are subjects for plastics. They actually had commercial extrusion plastic moulding machines set up in the lab, which I would normally find when I'm touring a factory, and were demonstrating how they could take these new formulations of bioproducts and produce substitute material for plastics.

Think of the advantage of that. Not only is it a great boost to agriculture—because there are now secondary uses for products that are really now just waste, so it's a great opportunity for agriculture; in addition, it's a wonderful opportunity for the environment, because instead of taking nonrenewable, oil-based resources in order to produce plastics, you can now take biological, renewable materials and use them as a substitute for plastics. This is cleaner, it's greener and it's better for the environment.

But the third advantage is that if we can get some of those jobs in Guelph and in Ontario, they will substitute for some of those traditional manufacturing jobs that are disappearing. In fact, the province happens to own some surplus lands in Guelph, and we've been working very closely with the city of Guelph and the University of Guelph to look at the future use of those lands, and exactly what we want to do with those lands is to set up a bio-innovation district. So the support that the province will be offering, if this bill passes, to move that process along is exactly what Guelph needs for its economic development.

I am absolutely thrilled that the Minister of Finance and our Minister of Research and Innovation are bringing this whole package of innovation ideas forward, in particular this one, because I think this will do great things for the future of Guelph and for the future of the larger Ontario economy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to add some comments to the speech from the member for Guelph on Bill 100, Ideas for the Future Act, 2008. This is a tax rebate, I guess, for new businesses, and we'll probably support it, but it has a very narrow focus on a tiny segment of our economy. I would say, based on the classifications of who qualifies and who does not qualify, it really is the government once again picking winners and losers in terms of enterprise. I can tell you, on this side of the Legislature, we support more broad-based tax initiatives where we let the individual businesses figure out for themselves who are going to be the most successful. I would point out that many economists agree with that perspective. I note in *The Globe and Mail* on September 22, Roger Martin, dean of the Rotman school of business, points out: "What we need to do is make sure Ontario is a place where businesses have the strongest possible encouragement to invest, and that has a lot to do with our marginal effective tax rates on investment, which are among the highest in the world," said Mr. Martin. "We have one of the dumbest tax structures on the face of the planet."

So we obviously have taxes that are affecting all businesses. This particular bill is affecting a tiny part of the economy. We need to lower our corporate tax rate, which is one of the highest in the country—corporations, 14%; this government raised it from 11%—and we have to be competitive with the rest of the country and the rest of the world if we want to keep our existing businesses and, in fact, attract more businesses, and we need to deal with the red tape and regulations that this government has created.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Thank you for giving me the chance to comment on this speech from the member for Guelph. I want to congratulate the member on her excellent speech because she outlined the intent and goal of Bill 100.

I know I've been hearing for the last two days many speakers from the opposite side speaking about totally different things, especially now the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka, when he was talking about private enterprise. How can he not support it? I wish he was paying attention to the member for Guelph when she was outlining the importance of Bill 100, which talks about intellectual property, how we can support researchers and innovators when they come to Ontario and allow them 10 years with no tax and give them the chance to explore their ideas and science in this province.

We also have another support mechanism, the Next Generation of Jobs Fund, to support private enterprise, if a company wants to expand and wants to update their factories, their machines, to be able to compete at the international level. The member for Guelph outlined the whole idea behind two things: intellectual property, Bill 100, and the Next Generation of Jobs Fund. I think she was perfect when she talked about those two elements and how important they are for our government, for our society, for our economy.

She also spoke eloquently about how, in her riding, the researchers come together to create products from waste and reuse it again to benefit the community and society and protect the environment.

I think when we have a good member, they speak eloquently and represent their riding very well. I want to congratulate the people from Guelph for sending that member to our Legislature in order to represent them very well, to work on their behalf, to understand the issues, to be a great advocate on behalf of her constituents and also the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments? Seeing none, the honourable member from Guelph has up to two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you to my colleagues from Parry Sound-Muskoka and London-Fanshawe for their responses.

Just in summary, I would like to emphasize that this is just one piece of a whole host of initiatives we have set up to encourage innovation in Ontario. If passed, Bill 100 would allow us to take innovative research that has happened throughout Canada, and if a firm can bring that to commercialization, it will be entitled to a 10-year tax break. It's as simple as that.

Now, it's true that there are regulations to determine which products, which projects, which research institutes and which companies qualify, which is exactly what you would expect a responsible law or regulation to lay out. As we've just seen in the US, when you abandon the private sector, or any sector, to a lack of regulation, we can have bad investment of funds, both public and private. We are responsible. That means we have put controls in place to make sure this money is spent appropriately. But I do believe there are people out there who want to make the investment.

I'd just like to close by telling you about one of my almost-constituents. He lives a couple of hundred yards away from my boundary; he used to be a constituent before the boundaries changed. Agricultural entrepreneur Peter Hannam donated \$100,000 to build the new centre for bioproduct discovery and development. He donated a further \$400,000 for research products. I should tell you that Peter's primary business is as a soybean producer—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you, honourable member. Further debate?

Seeing none, Mr. Duncan has moved second reading of Bill 100. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? Agreed? I heard a no.

All those in favour of ordering the bill for third reading, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

Interjections.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Speaker, I have a suggestion. I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): That's what I was expecting you to do.

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. Christopher Bentley: On a point of order, Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the Standing Committee on Estimates, that notwithstanding the order of the House earlier today, the Standing Committee on Estimates may meet at its regularly scheduled meeting times to complete consideration of the estimates of the Ministry of Labour.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Do we have unanimous consent to introduce the motion? Then I'll just read the motion.

The honourable Attorney General moves that "notwithstanding the order of the House earlier today, the Standing Committee on Estimates may meet at its regularly scheduled" meeting "times to complete consideration of the estimates of the Ministry of Labour." Agreed? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Orders of the day?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Bentley has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday, October 7, at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1604.

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Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
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O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	

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Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
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Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
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Howard Hampton, Greg Sorbara
Norman W. Sterling, David Zimmer
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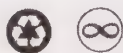
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 7 October 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 7 octobre 2008

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask members to join me in the recitation of the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Baha'i prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LEGISLATIVE REFORM

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order, Speaker: I made reference to the motion that was passed by the majority of this House, notwithstanding the opposition of the two opposition parties, in particular, the time allocation portion of that motion. It was a motion called for the first time on April 21, as I recall. It speaks of a "government substantive motion"—and I agree that what we have here is a substantive motion—"to extend or permanently adopt"—and this is a motion to permanently adopt—"the provisional standing orders." It's what I refer to colloquially as a ratification of the provisional standing orders, and that would be fine if it were left at that. However, this isn't a bare motion to merely ratify the provisional standing orders that were passed by the government on May 1, as I recall it. This also includes extensive additions to those provisional orders that were passed on May 1.

The issue here is the one-hour time allocation, and in particular the interesting language of the motion that this House's majority passed on May 1: The "government substantive motion" ... "and any amendments thereto, shall be called for debate.... The debate on such motion shall be limited to one hour...."

Now, this is what's of concern to me: There are two interpretations, in my respectful submission to you, of that language. One is—and I expect that this is the government's argument—that it's the motion, and that "any amendments thereto" refers to amendments to the standing orders.

I suggest to you that this language is equivocal: "any amendments thereto," I submit to you, could as readily be understood as amendments to the substantive motion. And if that were the case, this motion, which is far more than a ratification motion; which is a motion that goes far beyond merely saying we adopt the provisional orders provided for in the motion that was passed on May 1, I submit then that the language is such that it could equally

as readily be interpreted as being "amendments thereto" is restricted to one hour. We don't have amendments to the motion; we have amendments to the standing order.

I say to you that the language permits an interpretation that it says "amendments to the motion," but there are no amendments to the motion. You can't move amendments until after the motion is moved, and therefore this motion, being far more than a mere ratification motion, is not subject to the one-hour time limit.

I hope I have been clear. And I state further that if there is an equivocal interpretation, the interpretation that's most generous is the one that ought to be applicable, and that is the one, of course, that doesn't include the very onerous one-hour time allocation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to thank the honourable member from Welland for his motion. He certainly has raised some points that are worthy of consideration of me as Speaker.

I would like the opportunity to consult with the table on the points that have been raised. I'm going to call a 10-minute recess to have the opportunity to take that under advisement, consult with the table, and respond to the honourable member.

This House is in recess for 10 minutes.

The House recessed from 0907 to 0929.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I need to deal with and reply to the other point of order first, please. Thanks.

I want to thank the member from Welland for his point of order. The relevant part of the motion at issue reads as follows:

"Any government substantive motion to extend or permanently adopt the provisional standing orders, and any amendments thereto, shall be called to debate no later than the third Thursday following the resumption of the House in fall, 2008. The debate on such motion shall be limited to one hour, to be apportioned equally among the recognized parties, at the end of which time the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the motion." I agree with the member from Welland that there are two ways to interpret the motion, depending on how one takes the meaning of the phrase "and any amendments thereto."

On one interpretation, the one-hour debate is allotted to a motion to either adopt or extend the provisional standing orders. Such a motion would be a substantive government motion, but it would also be fully subject to amendment. Therefore, an amendment from the floor

during debate on a motion for extension or adoption which would propose to further amend the provisional standing orders along the lines proposed by the government House leader would be in order. A second interpretation is that one hour is allotted to debate on a motion to adopt or extend the provisional standing orders and any further amendments to them. This is the interpretation underlying the form of the motion the government House leader has put before the House.

In my view, it is fortunate for the House that, in effect, either interpretation essentially takes us to the same place, because neither way of proceeding represents an advantage or disadvantage to any side of the House, and in any event amounts to the same thing in this circumstance, albeit by slightly different procedural means. I find the motion to be in order and to be consistent with the order of the House of May 1, 2008, and with the process it set forth in dealing with our standing orders.

Moreover, a distinct benefit to the House of dealing with all of these amendments as a government notice of motion is that the entire proposal is on the order paper and has been given one day's notice. The alternative would have been for all of the proposed further amendments to be moved spontaneously from the floor during debate. Though this would have been in order, it would not have afforded all members the opportunity to prepare for today's debate.

I thank the member from Welland. The Minister of Government Services on a point of order.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You took the words of my point of order right out of my mouth, so it's now redundant. I thank you for that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate? Move the motion, please.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I move that the standing orders, as amended on May 1, 2008, be further amended as follows and adopted as the permanent standing orders of the House; and

That the permanent standing orders come into force at 12:01 a.m. on the Friday of the week that they are adopted by the House, except standing order 6(a) which shall come into force at 12:01 a.m. on January 1, 2009. Standing order 6(a) as it existed immediately prior to the coming into force of the permanent standing orders shall remain in effect until 12:01 a.m. on January 1, 2009.

That the definition of "routine motion" in standing order 2 be amended by striking out "9" in the second line and substituting "6."

That standing order 6(a) be struck out and the following substituted:

"6(a) During a Parliament, the House shall meet:

"(i) from the third Tuesday in February to the first Thursday in June; and

"(ii) from the Monday following Labour Day to the second Thursday in December.

"During these meeting periods, the House shall not meet during the following constituency weeks:

- "1. The week prescribed by the regulations made under the Education Act for the school holiday in March;
- "2. The week in which Easter Monday falls;
- "3. The week in which Victoria Day falls;
- "4. The week in which Thanksgiving Day falls;
- "5. The week in which Remembrance Day falls, except that if Remembrance Day falls on a Saturday or a Sunday, the House shall instead not meet the week preceding Remembrance Day."

That clauses (a) and (b) of standing order 8 be struck out and the following substituted:

"8(a) the weekly meeting schedule of the House, when it is in session, shall be"—

Mr. Peter Kormos: "For the House."

Hon. Ted McMeekin: "For the House." I thank the eagle-eyed member opposite for that.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Only one eye working.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: There you go. Better than most of us with two over here. Thank you.

"8.(a) The weekly meeting schedule for the House when it is in session shall be:

Day	Time	Proceeding
Monday	10:30 a.m.	Introduction of visitors
	10:35 a.m.	Oral questions
	Following oral questions	Deferred votes
	Following deferred votes	Recess
	1 p.m.	Introduction of visitors
	1:05 p.m.	Routine proceedings: Members' statements Reports by committees Introduction of bills Motions Statements by the ministry and responses Petitions
	Following routine proceedings	Orders of the day
	6 p.m.	Adjournment

“ Tuesday	9 a.m.	Orders of the day
	10:15 a.m.	Recess
	10:30 a.m.	Introduction of visitors
	10:35 a.m.	Oral questions
	Following oral questions	Deferred votes
	Following deferred votes	Recess
	3 p.m.	Introduction of visitors
	3:05 p.m.	Routine proceedings: Members' statements Reports by committees Introduction of bills Motions Statements by the ministry and responses Petitions
	Following routine proceedings	Orders of the day
	6 p.m.	Adjournment

“ Wednesday	9 a.m.	Orders of the day
	10:15 a.m.	Recess
	10:30 a.m.	Introduction of visitors
	10:35 a.m.	Oral questions
	Following oral questions	Deferred votes
	Following deferred votes	Recess
	3 p.m.	Introduction of visitors
	3:05 p.m.	Routine proceedings: Members' statements

		Reports by committees Introduction of bills Motions Statements by the ministry and responses Petitions
	Following routine proceedings	Orders of the day
	6 p.m.	Adjournment

“ Thursday	9 a.m.	Orders of the day
	10:15 a.m.	Recess
	10:30 a.m.	Introduction of visitors
	10:35 a.m.	Oral questions
	Following oral questions	Deferred votes
	Following deferred votes	Recess
	1 p.m.	Introduction of visitors
	1:05 p.m.	Routine proceedings: Members' statements Reports by committees Introduction of bills Motions Statements by the ministry and responses Petitions
	Following routine proceedings	Private members' public business
	Following private members' public business	Orders of the day
	6 p.m.	Adjournment”

"(b) The bells shall be rung for five minutes before the time appointed for the meeting of the House, and at 10:25 a.m. every day, to summon the members, and otherwise at the discretion of the Speaker."

That standing order 8 be amended by adding the following new clauses:

"(c.1) During any morning that the House meets, when the Speaker calls "orders of the day" the government House Leader may indicate that no business, or no further business, as the case may be, is to be called that morning, whereupon the Speaker shall without motion immediately recess the House until 10:30 a.m.

"(c.2) No later than 3:15 p.m. on any Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday that the House meets, the government House leader may indicate that no business is to be called during orders of the day on the next day's morning meeting, and in such case the House shall meet at 10:30 a.m. on that next day.

0940

That clause (d) of standing order 8 be amended by striking out the words "during the week prescribed by the regulations made under the Education Act for the school holiday in March" in the first, second and third lines and substituting "on the day on which there is a general election of members to serve in the Canadian House of Commons".

That standing order 9(b) be struck out.

That clause (d) of standing order 9 be amended by striking out the word "routine" in the fourth line.

That clause (h) of standing order 28 be amended by striking out the word "routine" in the sixth line.

That clause (a) of standing order 30 be amended by striking out "deferred votes" and substituting "petitions".

That clause (b) of standing order 30 be amended by striking out "petitions" and substituting "deferred votes".

That clause (c) of standing order 30 be amended by striking out "and any deferred votes," in the fifth line.

That clause (c) of standing order 32 be amended by striking out "notwithstanding standing order 46(a)" in the fourth and fifth lines.

That standing order 36 be struck out and the following substituted:

"36. Up to five minutes shall be allotted, immediately preceding 'oral questions' and again immediately upon the resumption of the House in an afternoon meeting, for members to recognize guests."

That clause (a) of standing order 38 be amended by striking out "4:30 p.m." and "5:00 p.m." in the ninth line and substituting "noon" and "4:00 p.m.", respectively.

That clause (b) of standing order 38 be amended by striking out "5:45 p.m." in the second line and substituting "6:00 p.m.", and by adding at the end of the clause "or, pursuant to standing order 6(c)(i) or (ii), to 6:45 p.m., as the case may be."

That clause (e) of standing order 38 be amended by striking out "5:45" and substituting "6:00".

That clause (b) of standing order 39 be amended by adding the word "routine" before the word "proceeding" in the second line.

That clause (c) of standing order 43 be amended by striking out "5:35" in the second line and substituting "5:50".

That clause (b) of standing order 44 be amended by striking out "5:35" in the fifth line and substituting "5:50".

That standing order 46(a) be amended by adding the following sentence:

"If at 10:15 a.m. on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday the division bells are ringing for a vote on a motion to adjourn the debate, the Speaker shall interrupt the bell, conduct the division and then immediately recess the House pursuant to standing order 8(a)."

That clause (b) of standing order 58 be struck out and the following substituted:

"(b) On the day designated for the presentation of the budget, the Speaker shall recess the House immediately following routine proceedings until 4:00 p.m., except that if routine proceedings have not been completed by 4:00 p.m., the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of the routine proceeding currently occupying the House and immediately call orders of the day."

That the following new standing order be added:

"68.1(a) private members' public bills may be co-sponsored by up to one member from each of the recognized parties, and by any independent member. It shall be the responsibility of the co-sponsors to select which among them will move the motion for introduction and first reading of the bill. Any of the co-sponsors shall be entitled to move the motions for second or third reading of the bill. The names of the co-sponsors shall be indicated on the introduction copy of the bill and shall thereafter be printed on the face of the bill.

"(b) Any one of the co-sponsors of such a bill may designate the bill as his or her item of business for private members' public business, and any or all of the co-sponsors may speak during the time allotted by standing order 97(a)(i). The member designating the bill for the purposes of private members' public business shall have charge of the bill in any committee.

"(c) A co-sponsor may withdraw as a sponsor of the bill at any time by providing written notice to the Clerk of the House. His or her name shall be removed from the bill entry on the orders and notices paper, and shall be removed from the face of the bill at any subsequent reprinting of the bill."

That clause (e) of standing order 125 be deleted and the following substituted:

"(e) There shall be not less than three hours of debate in the House on such a bill, to take place at a time or times allotted by agreement of the House leaders of the recognized parties."

That the Clerk of the House be authorized and instructed to print a revised edition of the standing orders of the House, renumbering and making such technical and consequential changes as may be deemed necessary.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. McMeekin has moved government notice of motion

number 86. I will now ask for debate. I recognize the Minister of Government Services.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Mr. Speaker, it's clear that I've had my share of time on this already, so I'll be sharing my time with the members for Huron-Bruce and London-Fanshawe.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I'm very pleased to rise today, and I will be supporting the recommendations going forward on the reform. I wanted to give a bit more detail for those who are listening to us and the debate that will be coming.

Specifically, there are 10 recommendations. From the Liberal apportionment of the committee, these are the recommendations. We also have dissenting reports from the official opposition as well as the third party, but the majority obviously carried the list of the recommendations. I wanted to lay that out. That's the foundation; that's what we ended with and now are debating in the House.

The first recommendation is that question period be scheduled at 10:30 a.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Certainly from the dissenting reports, there has been a great deal of discussion about question period, the time allocation. I wanted to specifically read into the record comments that were made by Dr. Nelson Wiseman. Dr. Wiseman is a professor at the University of Toronto and has been there since 1980. I feel that his comments were certainly on point. To quote:

"More important than the time of question period is how many question periods are held. On that score I note, according to your debate, that Ontario had more sitting days last year than any other Canadian Legislature. Ontario also devotes more time to question period than other Canadian Legislatures, and there's been no proposal to shorten it." That is not part of the recommendation. That's one quote.

A second quote from the same professor:

"The changes to the standing orders mean reorganized schedules for members and the media. I predict that in coming years, if a government proposes to revert to afternoon question periods or to reschedule the time for private members' bills and to reduce time for their debate or to reinstitute evening sessions, such proposals will be vigorously opposed also as an assault on democracy. The provisional changes in the standing orders, in my opinion, are no such threat."

0950

Another comment—and I've lost my pages here now. But one of the things that I wanted to reinforce was that this is a man who has reviewed over the years—for many, many decades. We have heard from him. It's not just the member speaking; it's also Dr. Wiseman speaking. Those recommendations, I believe, are quite pertinent and it will certainly be interesting to see, in time, if in fact he is correct. I think that he is, and there will be a great deal of protest coming the other way. So that's the first point on question period.

The second recommendation is that deferred votes be scheduled immediately following question period and the petitions be scheduled during routine proceedings. This is certainly something that came up in the discussions. This was to give a point in time for deferred votes. A concern was raised by the media, specifically, so that there was a better understanding from all sides about the schedules, how it would go forward and expectations. By scheduling deferred votes following question period, that speaks to the media's concerns and it also speaks to allowing the members better ability to schedule their day as well and to get to the votes. The people of Ontario want to know, and that's why the media raised the concern, so that all members would be held accountable—transparency—and so they know when the votes are being held.

The third recommendation is that question period be preceded by a five-minute bell. This is certainly something that the member of the official opposition brought forward and we are bringing that forward as a recommendation. We feel that it's important. It's the same as the second recommendation: It's about giving the members the ability to have full comprehension of their schedule and for it to flow much easier. By allowing the members the five-minute bell, it gives a point in time for question period to begin. It also gives a point in time when the debate ends and it goes forward. This was also a concern that was raised by the media, so that they knew when question period would begin. So it's a set time.

The fourth recommendation: that the legislative calendar, beginning in February, be adjusted to reflect four weeks on and one week off. So I say to you, Mr. Speaker, since there is no comment on that recommendation in the dissenting reports from either the official opposition or the third party, we can only assume that must be a recommendation that they're very supportive of.

One of the things that we all know as members is such a juggle is our constituency work as well as our legislative responsibilities. This gives us more time in our constituency offices and the ability to go out and meet with our people on a regular basis. We know, from the parliamentary calendar being laid out, when we will be back in our ridings, and it gives us greater flexibility to meet with our constituents. It also addresses the concern raised from our employees within the Legislative Assembly, on their allocation of time and how they deal with the bulk of the work through the Legislative Assembly. It also gives them the opportunity—and I will use this language—to catch up while we are back doing our work with our constituents. I must say that this is something that certainly has been supported. It also reflects much of how Ottawa works as well. It really has been very well received.

Point number five: that the House commence sitting each Monday morning at 10:30 a.m., followed by 9 a.m. on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday morning. This is one of the things that came up in the hearings from our expert witnesses. There was a concern raised that it was very difficult for the set-up and to get the information and technology ready for that early on Monday morning

at 9 o'clock. The recommendation coming forward is reflective of that, so the proceedings will begin at 10:30 on Monday to reflect the ability for the staff to get set up for us.

Recommendation number 6 is that routine proceedings be at 1 p.m. on Monday and Thursday, and 3 p.m. on Tuesday and Wednesday. The Monday and Thursday times are different because caucus and cabinet meet on Tuesday and Wednesday. That's the 3 o'clock time, and the 1 o'clock time is for Monday and Thursday. This gives us the ability to have more debate time in the House, and that's what these standing order reforms do: They give us the ability to have more debate time and to also be respectful of caucus time, as well as cabinet time.

Recommendation number 7: that the House should consider reviewing the use of e-petitions. This is something that the committee was just not prepared to move forward with. They felt that it was important that we give it further consideration. I felt, generally, as a member of that committee, that there was support, but we wanted to ensure that we had the information pertinent for the e-petitions, so that was sent back for further review.

The eighth recommendation is that the introduction of guests occur twice per day, once in the morning and once in the afternoon. The duration of that will be five minutes and the introductions will be done by the members; they will have the ability to introduce their guests. The reason this has come up repeatedly is that if we have a guest in the House, we are so pleased when people take the time to come into the House and to listen to the debate and to be interested in their Legislative Assembly. So we really do, as members, want to take—it's an honour and a privilege for us to be able to introduce our guests, as I'm going to introduce some guests just right now. They're from the riding of Huron-Bruce. That's all I'm going to say. It's for our young page. Welcome.

The ninth recommendation is that private members' business be conducted on Thursday afternoon, with three private members' bills or resolutions debated each day. In the past, as you know, we had two private members' bills. This gives us the ability to move three private members' bills forward. It changed; in the past, it was in the morning, and this is changing it to the afternoon.

We recognize that there is much more work to do with private members' bills, and we certainly stated that in committee. But the emphasis for the private members' bills coming forward—increasing the number—also gives all of us the ability to bring bills and motions forward that are important to the people of Ontario and important to our constituents within our ridings, and we felt it was important to increase that. But I do want to get on the record that we do recognize that there is much more work to do.

I'm now going to go to the 10th recommendation: that private members' bills can be sponsored by more than one member and by members of different parties. Since these came forward, we also have an independent member, and I would be remiss if I didn't recognize the independent member, who is, of course, my neighbour,

Bill Murdoch. I just wanted to say how important it is that we all represent—we all work very hard and we recognize that it's an honour and a privilege to represent the people of Ontario, and what we can do to move that forward, I believe, is very important. Co-sponsoring bills is one way that we can ensure that the importance of private members' business is reflected by all parties—and often it is. As I say to my constituents, if you want to listen to debate when the members are talking about what their thoughts are and they have a longer period of time to talk, and it's more a debate that we're used to, you come to private members' business.

1000

I can tell you that as a new member, when I first arrived at the House here in 2003, I was very impressed with the level of debate in private members' business, and the ability to co-sponsor bills, I believe, will strengthen and move bills forward faster.

I do not want to take any more time, as the member for London-Fanshawe, I know, is anxious to get up and speak. This is reform that, in my opinion, is certainly overdue. Reflecting how the business is conducted in Ontario, reflecting it in this House, is important. I'm always in favour of more debate time and more private members' business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? Member for Nepean-Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order: She indicated that the other Liberal members are going to share their time. Please, Ms. MacLeod, Mr. Ramal wants the floor.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): No, that's not the way it works on a motion like this. We actually go in rotation, notwithstanding the fact that she indicated who the other government speakers were going to be.

Member for Nepean-Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Mr. Speaker, I'd be pleased to—

Mr. Khalil Ramal: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The Minister of Government Services mentioned, when he was speaking, that he was going to share the time with the member from Huron and myself.

Mr. Peter Kormos: We agree.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I say to the member for London-Fanshawe, you will get your chance to speak if you are in the House when the rotation comes around and it's your party's turn.

I recognize the member for Nepean-Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Mr. Speaker, I hope that we will get more time on the clock. I've just lost one minute.

I appreciate the comments from my colleague from Huron-Bruce. I'd like to split my time with the member for Kitchener-Waterloo.

The member for Huron-Bruce talked about real reform. This is not real reform—they've not reformed parliamentary democracy—or parliamentary reform at all. In fact, their legacy on parliamentary reform is tinkering with our trillium, tinkering with the Lord's Prayer and

now tinkering with our question period. This has nothing to do with making Queen's Park more family-friendly. It has everything to do with penalizing the opposition. It is the rules in democracy that protect the minority from the tyranny of the majority, yet in these specific standing orders changes we have once again seen this Liberal government strong-arm the opposition into changes in our daily routine that will not produce any more debate. In fact, we've seen debate die in this chamber. We've gone to more recesses, as we've done today, and we have not been as effective in this chamber as we could have been.

I'd like to talk a little bit about this Liberal report, because it is worth noting that not only the Conservatives but also the New Democrats provided dissenting opinions on this Liberal family-friendly report. It suggests, "Before reviewing the standing orders, it is useful to review the chronology of significant events that preceded the 2008 provisional standing order changes." It says, in the first bullet, "On December 11, 2007, the House ordered 'that the House leaders of the recognized parties shall agree to terms, and an all-party panel composed of no more than two members from each recognized party shall be appointed to make recommendations to the Speaker on ways to make working at the Ontario Legislature more family-friendly for'" MPPs.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, I raised this issue five times in this chamber. In fact, not only did I raise it in the chamber but I've written several times to the government House leader asking when those committee hearings or those panel hearings would actually be called. December 11, 2007, and here we are today, in October 2008, and that panel has not yet met, despite an all-party commitment to do so. I rose five times in the Legislature, on December 6 and 13, April 8, 16 and 17. I also wrote to the House leader on January 25 and April 7 requesting that the panel be struck. The last time I wrote to the government House leader—and I've still not seen a response—was on Monday, July 21. We then began hearings here on the legislative changes, which my colleague will get into in full detail later on. But there was only one thing that we all agreed on in that committee, and that was that we should have a five-minute bell before question period. I'm very shocked that the Liberals would want to, under the guise of making Queen's Park more family-friendly, take our daily proceedings to what it has become today, which is nothing more than a daily mish-mash of chaos, one that breaks routine proceedings, one that breaks debate, one that has seen debate die in the chamber because the government is unwilling to put forward meaningful legislation.

So here we are today. On December 11, 2007, we made a commitment to make this Legislature more family-friendly. Instead of making the Legislature more family-friendly and looking at this institution as a whole in terms of parliamentary democracy, the Liberal government has decided that it would tinker with the rules in this place to make them look better so that they can control what goes on in this chamber.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for this opportunity. I want to let the Liberals know that I will not be support-

ing their heavy-handedness in this chamber, nor will I ever support it in their committee. I will look forward to listening not only to my colleague from Kitchener-Waterloo but also to my colleague from Welland, who I know will bring so many concerns to the table.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker. I regret this day as much as I did back on May 1, and, preceding that, April 21 of this year, when the provisional orders were first called, with the vote on May 1, and now today.

Look, I've been around here a little bit—not as long as Jim Bradley, not as long as Norm Sterling, but I've been around here a little bit. I have had occasion to decry and bemoan the government's rewriting of standing orders, whether it was David Peterson and the Liberals—you recall that, colleagues—and then again the Liberals' best friend, Bob Rae, and his tinkering with the standing orders, and then the Conservatives, the so-called Baird amendments. Majority governments, each and every one of them, huge majorities, disdainful of the opposition, just as this government is.

I don't relish today's motion or today's debate or the inevitable vote, time-allocated. The government used its majority to ensure that there would be but one hour to discuss these permanent changes to the standing orders. I want you to understand that, in an effort to ensure there would still be some room for reflection and—dare I say it?—common sense, knowing full well this government's capacity as a majority government to impose even the most undemocratic measures on this chamber, New Democrats very clearly offered to let these provisional standing orders remain as but provisional standing orders. Because you know as well as I do that once they become permanent—and that's what this motion is about—there's no turning back, is there? Never will there be any turning back.

There will be subsequent governments, and they won't be Liberal governments, and some of these Liberal members will be sitting in opposition. Some of them will. As sure as God made little apples, some of these Liberal members will be sitting—how many, it's not for me to say. But sure as God made little apples, some of these Liberal members will be sitting in opposition, and then they'll be fretting and moaning about how unfair the standing orders are to the opposition. It's not just a matter of convenience. The opposition role is a very important role in a parliamentary democracy. You, above all, above any other, understand that. Good government is as much about good opposition as it is anything else, isn't it, Speaker?

1010

The opposition has a very important job to do. One of them is to hold the government's feet to the fire, and one of the tools is question period, and the vehicle to communicate question period out there to the general public is the media. The media—the fourth and fifth estates—are the eyes and the ears of 13 million Ontarians. Don't

think for a minute that moving question period now even further down into the morning doesn't have design to it on the part of the Liberal government. Its purpose is to bury question period as far down on the agenda as possible and, quite frankly, to make this place irrelevant after 11:30. Hell's bells, if you come here on a Wednesday afternoon or a Tuesday afternoon, when you've got those big gaps in the middle of the day, the government's hard-pressed to keep enough people to here maintain quorum, aren't they?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Look at the crowd you've got.

Mr. Peter Kormos: You know full well what I'm talking about.

This government, Mr. McGuinty and his Liberals, are trivializing Parliament. That causes me great concern. Oh, not so much for myself. Heck, in 20 years' time I'm not going to be here. Make no mistake about it; in 20 years' time, I'm not going to be here. Mr. Hillier may well be here, Billy Murdoch will be here. Hell, Billy Murdoch may be leader of the Conservative Party long before 20 years, let me tell you that. There's more than a modest likelihood of that happening.

But I'm more interested in the crisis this creates for young parliamentarians, for newly elected members. I've been blessed. I've been incredibly fortunate. I tell you, being elected here in 1988, I came here, I suspect, in the best of times and have witnessed the worst of things. I came here when this place was a much more lively forum for legitimate debate and exchange, where the debate was as aggressive as anybody could imagine but where the level of civility was still much higher than it has been ever since—and I suspect Mrs. Witmer may well agree with me, if she's given the opportunity—when the relevance of the discussion was significant and when question period was truly a vehicle, a means, a process whereby the public had their say.

These are frightening times. We've got an economy that's going to hell in a handbasket real fast. Almost a quarter of a million workers already lost their jobs, and a quarter million to come. And finally, you've got a finance minister who might concede a shortfall in revenues, but you've got global economic leaders who are talking about global depression. Never has Parliament been more important, more relevant, and never has it been more shameful for a government like this government to trivialize, diminish, undermine, gut the role of Parliament.

Over my couple of decades here, I've seen the increasing transfers of power into the Premier's office, and it's not been a pleasant sight, and I've bemoaned each and every turn on the way. But we've never seen more power isolated and restricted to the Premier's office than we've witnessed today. It's not a matter of backbenchers not having any power; it's a matter of cabinet ministers not having any power. It's a matter of unelected people making political decisions about the future of this province, and that's not democracy, is it? That's not democracy.

I found it quite peculiar, but nonetheless revealing, that this morning, when the Premier was confronted by the press, the media, the newspaper and television and radio journalists, one Lee Greenberg, Queen's Park press gallery member, put to the Premier, "Premier, why are you suspending the House for election day? The NDP says you're doing it to free up political staff to get out to vote." Oh, and let's understand that this motion also contains a new holiday for MPPs. This motion contains yet another holiday for MPPs—not for workers, not for the civil service, not for legislative staff, but a new holiday for MPPs. This motion contains a provision that this provincial Parliament shall not sit on the day on which there is a general election of members to serve in the Canadian House of Commons.

Oh, I hear some heckling from across the way about, "Oh, so we can go home to vote?" You've never heard of advance polls, never heard of going to the district returning office and voting any time you want prior to the election? Working people, the ones who are still fortunate enough to be working, you know, the women and men who start work at 5:30 and 6 in the morning—

Mr. Bruce Crozier: Hyperbole.

Mr. Peter Kormos: "Hyperbole," the member says. Now Hansard has it. Hyperbole? That's how out of touch the Liberals are. The suggestion is that somehow it's not true that working women and men start working at 5:30 or 6 in the morning—out of touch, no contact with reality whatsoever. I think it's downright pathological—it could warrant medical intervention—to be that out of touch with reality, for the Liberal government to suggest that somehow it's hyperbolic—an interesting use of the word, isn't it?—to talk about workers starting work at 5:30 and 6 in the morning.

I don't know about where you come from, Speaker, but where I come from, hard-working women and men, the ones still fortunate enough to have jobs in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, wake up at 4 and 4:30 so they can get to work by 5:30. And they're out there in the blistery, blustery, cold, bitter winter January and February days, laying brick and pouring concrete and building things. If you're the single mom from Thorold or Port Colborne or Welland or Wainfleet, you're at that hotel in Niagara Falls, cleaning other people's messes as you clean hotel rooms for \$10 an hour. Then you start your second job at 3 in the afternoon at the 7-Eleven, because that's what it takes, again for \$9 an hour now, to put food on the table for your kids.

Oh, politicians moan and groan, "Oh, we work so hard. Oh, politicians work so hard." There's nary a blister to be seen in this joint, is there? The most frequent injury is a paper cut or the occasional bruised ego. Work hard? I'll tell you who works hard. People who work hard are like folks down where I come from. They're folks who work and earn far, far less than what MPPs are paid.

This motion creates a holiday, a special holiday, for what the government obviously sees as very special people—MPPs. You don't have to come to work on federal election days. Why, once again, isn't it strange

that somehow 107 MPPs can't go to advance polls, that somehow 107 MPPs can't go to the returning office and vote in the perpetual advance poll that's in every returning office across the province? You see, down where I come from, like most places in Ontario, indeed all of Ontario, on election day, those folks fortunate enough to work are going to go to work in the morning—and it's usually both spouses when you've got a two-spouse family. They're going to come home tired in the evening, in the dark, and they're going to make supper and then they're going to scramble to get to the poll to vote. That's how they do it. But no, that's not good enough for MPPs, is it?

1020

So you see, it's passing strange that when Mr. McGuinty is confronted with this, this morning, by Lee Greenberg, who says, "Premier, why are you suspending the House for election day? The NDP says that you're doing it to free up political staff to get out the vote"—indeed, the NDP did say that; I said that—the Premier replies, "That's an interesting theory." Listen to this, please. The Premier replies, "That's an interesting theory, but actually there is agreement that the provincial Legislature should not sit on federal election days." Somehow the Premier is so out of touch with reality or so disconnected or in fact has been told that there's agreement—there's no agreement. Horse feathers, absolute horse feathers. The fact that there's no agreement is because New Democrats wouldn't agree to that, because they said, "No, there's important public business to be dealt with." But the reason that New Democrats wouldn't agree is why it's in the motion. It's absolutely untrue to suggest that there's a precedent, because while there have been a couple of times in the far past when there was agreement in the House not to sit on federal election days, in the most recent federal elections where the House was sitting, the House sat.

So I find it strange that the Premier would somehow think that there's an agreement. Far be it from me to suggest that he's not telling the truth. I wouldn't do that. I will not accuse the Premier of lying about that; I won't. I will not accuse the Premier of lying when he told Lee Greenberg that there's an agreement about not sitting on October 14. Far be from me to accuse the Premier of lying; I simply won't do it. One Robert Benzie of the Toronto Star then says to the Premier, "But you sat in the last two." Answer from the Premier: "Yeah, but we're going to change that." And can I insert a little editorial here?—"and a whole lot of other things too." Murray Campbell, Globe and Mail, to the Premier: "Why? Agreement among whom?" Answer: "Ah, the ah, the parties."

No agreement—government brute force is using its majority to impose its will when it has no regard for process. I like the Government House leader. I like him. I have a great deal of affection for him. I have a great deal of regard for him, but I have sympathy for him because he's the House leader in name only. The House leader's office doesn't call the shots for the government. Caucus

doesn't call the shots. The Premier's office does. It's frustrating as all get-out and more than a little bit embarrassing for the government House leader, and for us. I don't want to speak for Ms. Witmer, but I think we share his embarrassment from time to time. He's got to go scurrying off to the minions in the Premier's office to check out a particular proposal, whether or not it's going to be agreeable, before he can say or do anything about it.

MPPs give themselves election day off—that's what this motion does. That's what this motion does. Unbelievable. Do you realize how working folks are going to respond to that? Yet another holiday for MPPs in the province of Ontario. Those hard-working MPPs will have hands as soft as babies' bottoms.

Before I exhaust the mere 20 minutes that's available to me, there's a revolutionary initiative on the part of the government to restore announcing of guests to the member himself or herself. Look, far be it from me to oppose that. I suppose it's the highlight of some of the backbenchers' careers, amongst the Liberal benches, to be able to announce somebody from their community. But if that's your only access to Hansard, then by all means, do it. I, for one, will continue to use the Speaker, and the Speaker has made it clear that he will be available to introduce guests when guests are present here in the chamber. I have no objection to guests being acknowledged; of course they should be. It boggles the mind that it's the highlight of the political careers of Liberal backbenchers to be able to get two lines in Hansard, announcing John and Wanda from Hometown, Ontario. God bless John and Wanda. I'm glad they came to Queen's Park. You're welcome any time. But down where I come from, folks expect me to be talking about their jobs, their children's education, public health care and public safety. Did I mention New Democrats aren't supporting this motion? Perhaps I should make that very clear; I didn't want to be equivocal at all about our position in this matter. I regret this. I may well have the opportunity, but I'm not the sort of person—ask my colleagues—who says, "I told you so."

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's right.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Ask my NDP colleagues whether I've ever had occasion to say, "I told you so," to them.

Mr. Paul Miller: Never.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm not that kind of person, but I suspect that I may well, if so blessed with the opportunity to be here an election from now, have the opportunity to say to some Liberals, "I told you so." It's a shameful day, a regrettable day, a sad day; it's not a day to be proud of at all. It's not a good day for democracy and not a good day for Ontario's Parliament. Thank you kindly, Speaker, for your patience with me.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the deputy leader of the official opposition.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to join my colleague who spoke earlier on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus regarding the change to the standing orders. As my

colleague has already pointed out, we actually were quite shocked at some of the decisions that have been made as far as changes to the standing orders are concerned and, also, the manner in which the standing orders were introduced.

As my colleague the member for Nepean—Carleton has pointed out, there was an agreement that the parties would meet and take a look at how they could make this Legislature more family-friendly for all members of the provincial Parliament. Regrettably, that committee never did meet. There was no prior discussion about making any changes to the standing orders. In fact, the first time that we in the Progressive Conservative caucus became aware of the changes was when the media received a copy of those changes before we did and the calls started coming in and the media were looking for our response. I would say in that way, I agree with the member for Welland. The government did certainly, in that particular case, demonstrate their disdain for the opposition in the fact that they were going to be imposing standing orders in this House with little opportunity for real debate, real consultation and any attempt at consensus-making. That brings us to today.

We have a report and recommendations before us. I can say to you, despite the fact that there were public hearings and despite the fact that we had little in the way of any expert witness coming forward, there was only one thing that the opposition agreed with the government on, and that is the fact that there's a need for a five-minute bell before the start of question period, which currently is at 10:45, but which is going to be moved to an earlier time.

We do take exception to some of the comments that were made this morning by the member from Huron—Bruce, where she said that it appears that all people agree. The reality is, we don't agree, we do have a dissenting opinion, and we won't be supporting the motion.

1030

I just want to give a few initial thoughts about the report that was submitted by the Liberal government. As I say, the only thing that there was agreement on was the fact that there would be the five minutes.

They refer in the report to expert testimony. We only had one outsider's opinion, and that was Professor Nelson Wiseman. He actually asked us if question period time had been changed, which we thought was quite interesting. The public was not at all involved. There was no unanimous support for what the Liberal government was doing. We had a public that was totally disinterested in this particular issue.

I think the committee and the report should refrain from making comments that would prejudice the opinions of all members of the Legislature. For example, a comment was made that members are generally satisfied with having morning/afternoon meetings instead of afternoon/evening. Well, the members of this House were never polled, and you can't arrive at that type of statement because we never had the opportunity. A statement was made that most members prefer the afternoon time

slot for private members' business. Again, members were not polled, and so that statement certainly is not valid.

The other thing about the splitting of routine proceedings: We're very concerned about what's happened in this House, despite the comments made by the member from Huron—Bruce about more debate time in the House. We actually are seeing less debate time in the House because of the splitting of the debate time. In fact, do you know that between May 5 and June 18, because of the new schedule, we actually lost and didn't debate for 34 hours and 12 minutes? This new debate time is not leading to more time spent on actual debate. I think it's important that some of those things get on the record.

I want to just go and deal with some of the other concerns that we have. As I say, there was little attempt to get any consensus. There was little opportunity for us to have any input into these changes. It was obvious that the government, with the introduction of the changes, had their mind made up. I think it was an attempt to somehow give less and less opportunity for the public to have input into these proceedings. We now have question period in the morning. I think most of us would say that in the afternoon, you could roll a cannon through this House because there's not much going on. So there's less opportunity for anybody to get involved.

But you know what? We recognize the need for standing order changes. We indicated, as far back as February 28 of this year, that we wanted to work with the government. We wanted these standing orders to be tested. We were quite amenable; in fact, we presented another model with an afternoon start time for question period at 1 o'clock, which would have allowed for the same number of hours of debate but would have kept routine proceedings together, and would have allowed more opportunity for people to properly prepare for question period. The government ignored that request and bulldozed ahead to where we are today.

We continue to take issue with the fact that question period is in the morning. We believe it is an attempt by the government to avoid public and media scrutiny. In fact, now, at the end of question period, they know that the reporters have to file their stories, and if some of the ministers stay in here long enough, they can actually avoid the press. We saw that happen last week. We, on the other hand, don't have the same resources and staff that the government does, and I can tell you, the morning clips aren't always ready at 8 o'clock. It makes it pretty tough with limited staff and limited resources to have all the information that you need, particularly now when question period is being moved even earlier to 10:30.

The other thing that's happened, I've noticed, is that we have these awards ceremonies—I know there are a few this month—and the Lieutenant Governor continues to have these in the morning. We used to attend them on behalf of our members, but I can tell you, I've got two this month. I have a responsibility to be here in this House, and so I can't attend those ceremonies with people in my community who are receiving awards. Nobody ever took that into consideration. Maybe we should be

rescheduling those ceremonies to the afternoon, when we, as MPPs, could be there to support the people in our communities who are getting awards.

So we believe this new question period time, which is shifting to 10:30, simply provides the government with an opportunity to avoid public and media scrutiny because they know that the media need to file their stories by lunchtime, and the media simply don't have the same opportunity and the same access.

We had representation from the Queen's Park press gallery, and they actually stated, "The new timing of question period and cabinet and caucus meetings has directly led to what the press gallery strongly feels is reduced access to cabinet ministers." So you know what? They acknowledged too that there was less opportunity. They also refer to the fact that they have this noon crunch time.

If you take a look at the schedule as it exists and as it's going to be changing, you'll see that it's really quite unpredictable. It's inefficient. It's undemocratic. It's erratic. It's centred around question period to the extent where the other routine proceedings just don't seem to matter anymore. That results in a minimized role of the Legislature and its elected non-cabinet officials. We would argue that the way routine proceedings has been split really does impede the smooth operation of the Legislature, and people aren't quite sure what's happening when. Even the Clerk of the Assembly indicated that we might consider reuniting routine proceedings and having them all within one time period rather than what we do today.

It is that change where we have divided routine proceedings that has led to the large gaps in the schedule that we have today and this unused debate time which I referred to. Between May 5 and June 18, we lost a total of 34 hours and 12 minutes of debate time because the House adjourned early. Now, given that the House is supposed to sit for 27 hours per week under the provisional standing orders, do you realize that this new debate time didn't give us more debate? We actually lost five complete sitting days, or more than a complete week of sitting time. So for the government to argue that this is more debate time is hogwash. It simply isn't happening. We should have reunited routine proceedings, which includes oral questions, or question period; it should have been in the afternoon, when more time is available; and we should have made sure that ministers' statements and petitions and everything was back together. The schedule now allows for less public and media scrutiny.

As far as the introduction of guests, we were quite happy to have the Speaker continue to do the introduction of the guests.

We're happy there is going to be a bell to signal the start of question period, but it's not going to solve the much greater problem of the disjointed proceedings in the House. I think that's one of the big problems with all of this.

I would say to the government that you've created a situation where petitions are now being punted out of prime spot. Again, I think you are displaying your lack of

concern for backbenchers. If we take a look at the role that you've given for private members' business, you've now put it on Thursday afternoon, again an example of total disdain and disrespect for the role of the MPPs. You've given it the obvious—you've relegated it to bottom-of-the-barrel status. At that time of day on a Thursday, with no government business left to be debated, there are few people left in this House. Even though you've added one more slot for a private member's bill, the reality is, unless you change the process, it is never going to see the light of day.

1040

We would like to see us take a look at what happens in other jurisdictions, such as Alberta, where private members' bills can be referred to a policy field committee after first reading or cabinet ministers can transfer them to government business.

You trial-ballooned the House schedule; the member from Huron-Bruce said, "Well, they must have supported it." The reality is, we never saw the revised parliamentary calendar, so we couldn't respond to it.

We were shocked to see this suggestion that we begin accepting online petitions—that was never discussed—and we were surprised that the Premier pre-empted the committee's report when he launched an e-petition on September 22, sending the false signal that online petitions are accepted in Ontario.

We believe that these changes that have been made to the standing orders should have more appropriately been dealt with by the House leaders. We should have made sure that all people had an opportunity for real input. Based on the report that we have here today, it doesn't reflect our concerns and it doesn't reflect the concerns of the third party. It is simply an attempt by the government to avoid the scrutiny of the public, of the media, and the whole hearing process turned into a pointless, patronizing exercise, which didn't benefit the people in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? Seeing no further debate, Mr. McMeekin has moved government notice of motion number 86. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being requested, pursuant to standing order 9(d), the vote will be held this afternoon during deferred votes.

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being very close to 10:45, I would ask the members to stand by, pending the return of the Speaker for question period.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning, members. There are some guests we'd like to welcome to Queen's Park today.

On behalf of page Marissa Scott, her mother, Liz Scott; her twin brother, Ethan Scott; her grandfather Frank Golding; and her grandmother Janie Golding, in the members' gallery. Welcome today.

On behalf of the member from Kenora-Rainy River, we'd like to welcome a 29-member delegation of governors, politicians and policy advisors from the Social Democratic Party of Sweden in the west public gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park and the Ontario Legislature today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Minister, yesterday you suggested to the media that your upcoming economic statement will be printed in red ink, and obviously that has generated even more concern among Ontarians about your ability, let alone your willingness, to deal with economic challenges. Perhaps you could give us some insights in terms of your ability and willingness by giving us an update today on how much progress you've made with respect to the \$1 billion included in your budget, where you stressed that to achieve a balanced budget seven months ago you would be looking for \$1 billion in savings and efficiencies. Can you give us an update on the progress there?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I think Ontarians can be confident that the government and its five-point plan are managing the challenges in the world economy today as best as can be done. In addition to what the Leader of the Opposition cited in terms of our own internal management opportunities, where we identify savings to be able to invest in things like infrastructure, quality education, quality health care, factors that are important to invest in at a time of economic challenge, we continue to work on a monthly basis through the treasury board and the Management Board of Cabinet. We will be updating the budget numbers on October 22, and I look forward to an opportunity to debate all of that with the leader and others in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I would suggest an important component of getting through difficult times is having confidence in the people making decisions in dealing with the provincial economy. It's regrettable the minister doesn't want to be more forthcoming with the assembly or the people of this province.

We saw more turmoil in the financial markets yesterday. People are rightfully worried: business owners, factory workers, retirees, people just starting out, young people. They're looking for answers.

Minister, will you at least advise us today of the status of the \$800-million rainy-day fund? How much is available today to help us weather this situation?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What I can say is this government identified the challenges in the Ontario economy more than a year ago. We began significant investments in infrastructure. Just last month, the Premier announced \$1.1 billion to assist our municipalities. We identified a year ago, particularly for those families who are faced with the prospect of unemployment, the need for skills training and invested more than \$1.5 billion in skills training, and today there are people across the province learning new skills that will help them and their families through this situation.

This government recognized the need for targeted tax relief aimed at manufacturers and foresters as part of a broader solution. Those are the steps that will see Ontario through these challenging times, and we will emerge stronger, better and better equipped to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The question was to address the concerns of Ontarians, and we get two non-answers. Ontarians have to be—at least the few who get to view our proceedings these days—truly disappointed in the minister's responses. Despite what his Premier described this morning as Ontarians' tremendous anxiety about the state of the economy, we only hear innocuous platitudes from the Minister of Finance.

Minister, will you commit today, in recognition of the gravity of the situation, to an earlier presentation of your economic update and that it will include a detailed plan to address revenue shortfalls and ballooning public sector compensation commitments?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Ontarians support the need for investments in infrastructure, which this government is doing. Ontarians recognize the need to invest in the next generation of jobs, the need to attract new technologies, new jobs to this province. Ontarians embrace the need for better skills training so that we can match people to jobs, and Ontarians most of all recognize the challenge in the world economy today. They recognize and are concerned, obviously, about a range of factors, but what they know is that governments must respond in a balanced and prudent fashion that recognizes that investments in infrastructure, investments in skills training and investments in a range of new technologies are important. Finally, they recognize the need for partnership between governments and others in the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

1050

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is also for the Minister of Finance. Experts have been repeatedly saying that the mortgage and credit meltdown in the US would affect financial markets worldwide. Our party has warned you repeatedly, Minister, for over a year of the economic storm clouds gathering over Ontario. Now it's pouring

rain, and yet I am shocked to see your reaction in the press yesterday.

If experts saw the warning signs, and we saw the warning signs, as the chief financial officer of Ontario, Minister, how could you have missed them on the horizon? The question is: Are you negligent or just incompetent?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the member to withdraw the comment, the very final comment that he made, please.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I withdraw the comment, Speaker. Thank you.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I think Ontarians expect us to show some civility as we debate these very challenging issues.

Some three years ago, this government set up Reaching Higher, which has invested billions in education, just what we need at this time, and that member voted against it. Last year, in infrastructure—you could see the projects up and down the 401—another \$9.9 billion that's employing Ontarians and dealing with long-term structural challenges. You, sir, voted against every single dollar. We're investing more than a billion and a half in training dollars to help unemployed Ontarians. You, sir, voted against it.

The time is for a serious and civil debate on these important issues—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: This past June, our leader, John Tory, demanded an emergency debate on the economy and an immediate economic and financial update. We have persisted; you just resisted. You didn't want to cancel your summer vacation plans.

The Premier told Ontarians that this too shall pass. We've been warning you for the last two years that your high-taxing and high-spending policies would leave this province ill-prepared to deal with an economic crisis, and you dismissed it and procrastinated.

Now you change your tune and you say the world is a different place. Well, no kidding. What you are really saying is that you don't have any plan for saving people's jobs, their homes, their savings. In fact you don't have a clue, do you?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In the budgets of 2006, 2007, 2008 and even before, this government identified and enumerated the challenges that faced the economy. What we did was make unprecedented investments in post-secondary education, unprecedented investments in infrastructure, unprecedented investments in attracting new high-technology jobs to this economy, and we have worked diligently to try to build partnerships with our municipal partners, First Nations and, indeed, even the federal government.

The challenges in the world economy are real. The issues resonate with Ontarians. This government has responded time and again to prepare us for this, and I say it's the right plan at this time. Ontario will be better and stronger for it when—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: The minister talks about investments. Ontarians have seen this movie before. It starred Liberal Premier David Peterson, who recklessly spent this province into a huge deficit. It co-starred the new Liberal Bob Rae, who then spent Ontario through a recession. The idea that the government can spend itself into prosperity did not work then and it won't work now. You say you're looking at previous downturns to indicate the way forward. You've screwed things up over five years.

Will you at least commit to Ontarians that you won't kick them when they're down, that you won't raise their taxes, that you won't introduce any new taxes in your October 22 economic statement?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I want to reassure Ontarians that the kinds of investments we are making are the types of investments that will help them and their families. Our five-point plan, which sees us investing in infrastructure, sees us investing in new jobs and skills training, sees us building partnerships, is the right approach. I can assure them that this government that balanced a \$5-billion deficit that was left by that member and his party will continue to act prudently and responsibly, making investments where they are needed, making them in a targeted fashion, responding to the needs and interests of Ontario families right across this province.

The challenge is on this Legislature to respond to those families. We are doing that with a comprehensive approach. We'll continue to maintain that and make adjustments where needed, recognizing that Ontario families are counting on us to lead the way through this challenging time.

POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. As the Premier knows, Ontarians and their families are hurting. Tens of thousands of well-paying manufacturing jobs have been lost in recent months. Today's Vital Signs report shows that family poverty rates have risen 10% in Toronto since the year 2000.

At times like these, governments have a choice. They can throw up their arms and say that nothing can be done, or they can show leadership by assisting those who are losing their jobs and falling into poverty.

My question to the Premier: Would the Premier please state clearly, once and for all, that his government will be there for those Ontarians most affected by these difficult economic times and that the October 22 economic statement will contain specific measures detailing this commitment?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to speak to this issue. Let me start, first of all, generally, by acknowledging what Ontarians are experiencing both in their homes and in their businesses. There's tremendous economic turbulence being felt south of the border, over in Europe, and in the Asian community as well. I think

Ontarians understand that we are not entirely immune from what goes on outside our borders.

I think we also need to acknowledge something we did at the beginning of our first mandate. We recognized that the dollar was going up and, unlike previous times, it was going to stay up. We recognized that oil was going to go up and, unlike previous times, it was going to stay up. We recognized that for the very first time the full consequences of globalization would be visited on Ontarians, especially on our businesses. We anticipated that. We took some steps to address that, and in the supplemental I'll speak to those.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Prue: If the Premier recognized all of that, then I hope the Premier has an answer for the second part.

In economic downturns, active government engagement is more important than ever. As economist Mike McCracken wrote in last Saturday's *Toronto Star*, "The sensible approach in a recession is to stimulate the economy with government spending in areas that help people obtain work."

Will the Premier pledge to Ontarians that his government will make a commitment to these kinds of investments, programs and supports when it issues its October 22 economic statement?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, recognizing as we did the global economic realities when we first formed the government, we took a number of steps and we moved very quickly. I think it was four years ago that we put out our Reaching Higher plan, a massive \$6.2-billion investment in post-secondary studies. That means that today we have 100,000 more young people in our colleges and universities. In our last three budgets, we also invested massive amounts in infrastructure. Today, as a result of that, there are over a dozen major projects under way in Ontario, employing over 10,000 workers. Three years ago, we understood the value of innovation, so we created a brand new Ministry of Research and Innovation. So far, we've invested \$1.5 billion in over 1,000 projects to help build the new jobs of the future. Those are steps that we took several years ago.

We have a solid plan in place. We will continue to move forward on that plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Michael Prue: I'd like to remind the Premier that my two questions have been about the poor and poverty, and you have yet to say a word about them.

The Premier sometimes speaks as though protecting those at risk of poverty during an economic slowdown is irresponsible and pointless. Even as the ranks of the poor are swelling day by day, the Premier has suggested that the government has to "focus on core priorities," and its poverty reduction strategy seems not to be a priority any longer.

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Will the Premier agree that now is not the time to backtrack on government action to support the eco-

nomically vulnerable, but rather it is the time to invest in Ontarians to ensure that as many people as possible are healthy, productive and fully contributing members to our province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'll try to speak more specifically to the question. I think one of the things we enjoy here in this House is the opportunity, the responsibility and the privilege to give expression to the values that we share as Ontarians. I think, in the face of an economic downturn, as our revenues shrink, Ontarians expect us to manage carefully, to act responsibly, to be thoughtful and particularly to protect those who experience real challenges as a result of this downturn. So we will protect those public services that families have to be able to count on and we will find a way, notwithstanding our economic challenges, to move forward in a real and meaningful way to lend greater assistance to people growing up in poverty in the province of Ontario.

POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue: To continue in this same line, as of July 31 the government had received at least 92 submissions to its poverty consultations. These are detailed submissions from diverse groups that include low-income people who have thought deeply about how best to reduce poverty, their own and others. The government has said that it is taking seriously the recommendations from these groups, some of which could be implemented immediately.

Can the Premier indicate which of the many recommendations of these 92 contained in the submissions will be included in the October 22 economic statement?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I do want to acknowledge the tremendous interest that has been generated by our commitment to reduce poverty in this province. Across the province, people have gathered around their kitchen tables, around boardroom tables and have really started to talk about solutions. They started to talk about what can we do as a community, what can we do as a business community or a faith community, what can we do to improve opportunities for people living in poverty in this province. They also, of course, have given us some really good advice on what they expect us to do, what they expect the federal government to do. We are moving very quickly towards the release of our poverty reduction strategy. I look forward to the time when we do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplemental?

Mr. Michael Prue: I think moving quickly would be a commitment to contain something in the October 22 statement. The government may not have had time to read the submissions, but we have. There are several priorities that are shared by many of the organizations. Two of the most commonly mentioned priorities are the need to increase access to affordable housing and the need to increase access to public child care. Today's Vital Signs report shows that housing is becoming less

and less affordable; half of all renters in Toronto now pay more than a third of their income in rent.

Could the minister affirm to Ontarians that these are, indeed, important components of a poverty reduction plan and that a significant down payment on affordable housing and children will be introduced on October 22?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm going to ask the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to talk about this multi-pronged question.

Hon. Jim Watson: The honourable member does bring up a very valid point. Housing is an important component of the poverty reduction strategy and this has been front and centre at public consultations that I've held in my riding and other members have held in their ridings. That's why we're proud of the fact that we're the government that did sign the affordable housing program agreement with the previous federal government. To date, 6,301 units have been built; 2,063 are under construction; 3,650 are awaiting planning approval; and the remainder, 8,737, are with local service managers. All of the money has been allocated. It's in the field, and houses are being built. Do we have to do more? Yes, and we encourage the federal government to come to the table and help us with the affordable housing program.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: Back to whichever minister will be handed the ball in the next round: Addressing poverty today reduces costs that governments must bear tomorrow. Investing \$1 in child care saves \$3 in future social costs. Investing \$1 in affordable housing saves \$4 in emergency shelter costs or up to \$12 in hospitals and prisons. Poverty reduction matters to Ontarians. A recent survey found that it was the fourth most important issue in this federal election.

Will whoever assure Ontarians that the government is not going to go slow on poverty reduction, but will move ahead strongly by committing in the upcoming budget and in the upcoming financial statement to reducing poverty by at least 25% in the next five years, and by making a significant down payment for poverty reduction initiatives?

Hon. Jim Watson: I refer to the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The statistics that the member opposite cites are exactly the reason that we are moving forward on poverty reduction. We acknowledge that we can't afford the levels of poverty that we currently have. We are committed to reducing poverty in this province. The Ontario child benefit, which was introduced in the March 2007 budget, is in the hands of families across the province right now. Many people said, on the poverty reduction consultations, "What we need is more money in our pocket." The Ontario child benefit does exactly that: It puts more money in people's pockets.

On the child care front, I think it's very important to acknowledge the progress that we've made, despite the

cuts to our child care funding from the federal government—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. New question.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is for the Premier. Your new Minister of International Trade is travelling in Saudi Arabia, a trip funded by Ontario's taxpayers. There was no press release, no details released. Sound familiar?

What companies went with her, what contracts do they hope to obtain, and what will be the cost to Ontario taxpayers, Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: One of the ways that we've always understood that we need to put more muscle into our economic growth—we've got so many of our eggs in the US export market that we knew we had to expand. So we have opened up a number of international offices, for example. We now have a minister devoted exclusively to pursuing international trade opportunities. Minister Papatello is in the Middle East. She is visiting the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. She's leading 20 Ontario companies to a networking exhibition in the UAE. We have heard for a long time about the vitality associated with the UAE, particularly Dubai, as a new financial sector. We know it's time for Ontarians to exploit opportunities in that part of the world, and that's what we're doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It wasn't long ago that the Premier promised Ontario a Fiat auto plant. He went to Italy, only to return empty-handed. It was embarrassing for the Premier and it was also embarrassing for Ontario. Is this trip to Saudi Arabia simply another junket paid for by taxpayers, and can we expect the same results again?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that, notwithstanding the wording of that question, the honourable member recognizes that it's absolutely essential, in an era of globalization, that we reach out to the rest of the world, that we find new opportunities, that we increase new trade ties, that we find more markets for Ontario innovators and entrepreneurs to sell their products, and that we lure new foreign direct investment into Ontario to secure new investment here and create new job opportunities here. That's exactly the kind of initiative that Ms. Papatello is pursuing.

We don't necessarily get the answer we're looking for every time, we don't necessarily get the answer we're looking for right away, but I know that Ontarians expect us to work as hard as we can, and we'll continue to pursue these opportunities

HEALTH PROMOTION

M^{me} France Gélinas: My question is for the Minister of Health Promotion. In the gallery today there are 27 visitors from the Swedish Social Democratic Party. They are here to learn about the health status of Ontarians.

Sweden has been a leader in developing comprehensive health goals that recognize the social determinants of health. They have set goals to improve economic and social security, to improve working lives and to improve community and social participation, because those are important to keep people healthy.

Does the government recognize and seek to improve the many social and economic conditions that influence health status, and what targets have they set?

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The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I thank the member opposite for her question. This government is certainly very concerned about the health of Ontarians—and of all the people of Ontario. That is why this government has started this Ministry of Health promotion, which was introduced in 2005, to address the issues of health promotion in terms of keeping people healthy. This government recognizes that when we keep people healthy in Ontario, it will be a tremendous benefit, not just to us as members of communities in Ontario, but also to the health care system in Ontario. We continue to work with all kinds of programs in this particular ministry that address the issue of health promotion in terms of chronic disease prevention, injury prevention, and the Smoke-Free Ontario Act.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Mr. Speaker, this party certainly welcomes a health promotion ministry, but it's hard to consider it a priority when the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care spends \$45 billion and the Ministry of Health \$130 million. There is a wide spread here. We can see where the priority is. In 2006, the government pledged to develop a 10-year health strategy, and they held consultations about it, but this process seems to be going nowhere.

Experience in Sweden shows that setting goals for improving working conditions, income security, social equality and the environment pays huge benefits to improving population health. Does the minister agree that there is a need to set measurable targets for health improvement—of health goals, as the Swedish would say—that focus on the social determinants of health? Will the government develop such goals as part of their 10-year health strategy?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I agree with the member opposite that we do need to set targets to determine the health of Ontarians. We certainly have been doing that in the Ministry of Health Promotion. Part of the things that we do in this particular ministry that are aimed again at keeping Ontarians healthy include having 49 new satellite community health centres, which are part of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and are in our communities to assist our Ontarians in moving forward with keeping healthier. We also have a diabetes prevention strategy; recently our government introduced a \$741-million diabetes prevention strategy. We continue to move forward—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

VIOLENT CRIME

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. As you are aware, the city of Toronto, including my riding of York South–Weston has experienced a rash of shootings over the past several weeks. One incident in particular has significantly shaken our community. A few weeks ago, an 18-year-old was gunned down while waiting at a bus stop. Since that horrific accident, I have met with local residents, the business improvement association and 12 division of the Toronto Police Service to get a better grasp of what steps our community could be taking to tackle violent crime in the area. The meeting was attended by actively engaged neighbours, as well as the Spice Isle Association, who work to cultivate good communications between police and the community. I was pleased to see that there was a very active partner at the table, the Eglinton Hill BIA. All of these partners are working to make sure that the communities engage, talk about crime, and how we can prevent—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to thank the member for outlining the question so well and for her incredible advocacy within her own community. Crime of any type deeply affects our community, and that's why we as a government will do everything we can possibly do. That's why we're investing \$37 million a year in the Safer Communities—1,000 Officers program, which has translated into 250 new police officers for the Toronto Police Service. That's why we're funding the previous government's community policing program: \$68 million is invested each year to ensure that we have 2,000 more police officers on the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: It is so important to have a continued commitment to stopping the spread of violent crime. Increasing the number of police on our streets is a crucial part of reducing crime, and a real connection to the community is needed to achieve tangible results.

In my meeting with the local staff sergeant, we talked about community policing at length. This approach helps to break down the barriers between local residents and the police, leading to greater co-operation and ultimately to more success in keeping our streets safe.

The residents of York South–Weston work directly with both community police liaison committees of 12 division and 31 division on issues of community safety. This interaction develops trust and promotes open dialogue with concerned citizens.

Can the minister please explain to the House what actions this government is taking to further the community policing approach in Ontario?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: That is a very important question. Our government is investing \$73 million a year on the guns and gangs strategy. We're also making very significant investments in the Toronto anti-violence inter-

vention strategy, known as TAVIS. We're also investing in the provincial anti-violence intervention strategy, known as PAVIS. But you know what? We have to invest in other programs as well, so we are investing \$28 million to create a youth opportunity strategy to help young people faced with challenges achieve success. This important strategy includes a summer jobs for youth program, developing skills for future careers in policing, youth and policing initiatives and school-based prevention programs.

Listen, this strategy has to encompass all sectors within the province of Ontario. I'm pleased with the efforts—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. New question.

TOURISM

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Premier and it concerns tourism. Our tourism industry is beginning to wonder whether the tourism competitiveness study is really just an \$8-million farewell tour for the member from Vaughan. Over the years, Ontario tourism has been studied and studied and studied. In fact, we've counted 21 separate studies and reports in recent years, yet the challenges remain. The tourism competitiveness study could have been done at no incremental cost to the taxpayer and could have been completed in 90 days, in time for last summer's tourism season. How can the Premier justify such imprudent spending of \$8 million of taxpayers' dollars when he is asking Ontarians to tighten their belts?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Tourism.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the competitiveness study, having just been at the opening of the Ontario Tourism Summit which is happening today in Toronto, with over 400 to 500 participants. It is an exciting opportunity for our Ontario tourism marketing partners to gather together and talk about how we can improve tourism for the province.

We've been working closely with our partners for a number of years, and my predecessors Minister Fonseca and Minister Bradley have worked closely with our partners and answered their concerns and their requests for a competitiveness study, which was promised in our platform, which was announced in last year's budget and which is moving forward under the able leadership of Greg Sorbara, who is well respected within the industry. They are delighted with the work he is doing, the travel he has done across the province, his discussions with a variety of stakeholders within the tourism industry and outside as we set the platform and the stage for moving forward with our tourism—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Ted Arnott: If the member for Vaughan is going to be named the tourism czar and if only he can find the solutions to the problems facing tourism, he could have been appointed to a select committee of the Legislature

and the study could have been done in 90 days at absolutely no incremental cost to the taxpayer.

The Premier's refusal to answer this question shows that he is oblivious to the concerns of the tourism industry. While people are losing sleep because of their worries about their savings, their homes and their jobs, the government blew \$2.3 million on a one-night party at the Windsor casino, possibly the most lavish, expensive and self-indulgent bash in Ontario's history. When many Ontarians couldn't afford holidays this past summer, this government wasted millions on hotel rooms—some ministries up by almost 50%. Will the minister commit to reining in the government's wasteful spending addictions and will the Premier follow the example set by millions of Ontarians who are having to tighten their belts because of this economic crisis?

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Hon. Monique M. Smith: I appreciate the opportunity to continue to discuss what we're doing with the tourism industry in partnership. As the member opposite knows, he was invited to attend the summit. I understand his staff is there today and I think he'll be attending tonight or this afternoon—and I hope you will, because I can tell you that through my participation this morning, the 400 people who are there are very excited about the competitiveness study. They're very supportive of this initiative. They're also very supportive of the other expenditures that we've made in the tourism industry to try to support the tourism industry in this difficult time.

Since 2006, we've invested 14.5 million new dollars through our economic stimulation packages to enhance our Ontario festivals. Through our There's No Place Like This campaign, we've encouraged Ontarians to visit Ontario, and we've seen a 5% increase in our domestic tourism this year. We've also seen that campaign expand into the States through an additional investment of \$20 million, and we're targeting markets such as Boston—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. In rubber-stamping a major hospital restructuring without hearing the public, the local health integration network for Hamilton has shown that it lacks the process, the analytical skill and the capacity to make good and thoughtful decisions.

Hamilton city council, our Hamilton and District Labour Council, our EMS paramedics, hospital doctors and the community at large are all demanding that the LHIN live up to its mandate and hold proper public hearings. Will the minister side with our community and tell the long-elected LHIN board to start over because the government actually wants a proper process with full community participation and input?

Hon. David Caplan: In fact, it is people in the local community, both at Hamilton Health Sciences and at the local health integration network, who have been able to

craft this plan and deliver I think what's going to be better health care for Hamiltonians.

I quote Dr. Robert Issenman, professor at McMaster University. He says: "This plan is a 'win-win' for adults. Saying yes to this plan opens the door to the most modern medical care for the most people, supporting the health and growth of the city." This member should be aware that Hamilton city council has declared their goal is to make Hamilton the best place in the world to raise a child. In fact, these decisions are in keeping with the desire identified by Hamilton city council to do just that.

In fact, I would go further. I have more information for the member about some of the local decisions and the local benefits of the plan, and I would be happy to offer those in the supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I certainly do know what the goals and priorities of my community are because I actually listen to what the community says when big plans are coming forward. Our community is saying very loudly and strongly that they're not happy with the process that the LHIN undertook.

In fact, a board member from the LHIN actually resigned. Stephen Birch quit the LHIN board after the sham job it did of researching and analyzing the Hamilton hospital proposal. He says the LHIN's weakness does not bode well for the future of health care in Hamilton and that the LHIN of Hamilton, Niagara, Haldimand and Brock has actually made a huge mistake.

The Ontario Ombudsman has the authority to investigate LHIN networks, and I have requested that he launch an investigation into the LHIN in our community. Does the minister support having the Ombudsman review this LHIN and its failure to live up to its mandate and insist on community consultation, or is he okay with the failed process that happened with our LHIN in our region?

Hon. David Caplan: Nothing could be further from the truth than what the member suggests. In fact, in today's Hamilton Spectator, under the heading which says, "LHIN Showed Leadership," I'd like to quote the article from Lee Prokaska for the member opposite: "It's time to let go of parochial concerns and emotional rhetoric and accept that Hamilton Health Sciences' restructuring of its facilities is a good thing, not just for Hamiltonians, but also for those in the broad geographic area served by our city's hospitals."

"The restructuring, which will see a paediatric emergency room at the McMaster site and other specialties focused in other sites, will provide our community with unprecedented specialty strength and facilities capable of attracting world-class medical talent."

"There is no evidence these changes—even the lack of adult ER services at Mac—will be anything but good for everyone in the HHS"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question is for the Minister of Transportation.

I know that both the minister and our government make transportation a high priority, particularly in developing new transportation links in the riding of Peterborough. With the busy schedules that most people living and working in Ontario maintain, getting from point A to B as quickly as possible is vital to their lives. Many residents of Peterborough who travel to Toronto for work and for pleasure are eager to see the completion of the extension of the 407. People travelling to Peterborough or to cottage country from the GTA are looking forward to having the opportunity to use the 407 extension to Highway 115 north as an alternative route.

To the Minister of Transportation: Please provide those interested in the 407 extension with a timeline as to when they can expect this important project to be completed.

Hon. James J. Bradley: That's an excellent question, I must say. Transportation, as he knows, is a priority of this particular government. That is why we are working to complete the 407 east environmental assessment study. In fact, we plan to submit the EA for review and approval in mid-2009, and this project is scheduled for completion as early as 2013.

A preferred route has been selected for a new east-west transportation corridor to extend Highway 407 easterly to Highway 35/115, and two north-south links connecting Highway 401 to the proposed extension of Highway 407, one in west Durham and one in east Durham.

I'm sure the member would be interested to know that we're looking at both a highway and a transitway expansion. This is part of our commitment to getting people out of their personal—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary.

Mr. Jeff Leal: A topic that is being widely discussed in Peterborough today is the train. Another transportation issue that has seen a great deal of media coverage in my riding is the possibility of re-established train service to Peterborough. Those who travel back and forth to the GTA on a daily or weekly basis are very interested, as we are, in this initiative. Currently, the only transportation available for commuters is bus service or driving their own vehicles. With the high cost of gasoline and the need to reduce the number of vehicles on our highways for sound environmental reasons, the possibility of alternative means of travel such as rail service is attractive. Train service would offer commuters an opportunity to travel to the GTA without having the worry of dealing with traffic volumes or weather conditions.

Would the Minister of Transportation provide the residents of Peterborough with an update on this initiative?

Hon. James J. Bradley: First, I'd like to acknowledge the tireless work of the provincial member for Peterborough on transportation issues.

Since 2003, this government has invested more than \$72 million in the city of Peterborough for transit, highway, municipal roads and bridges. We recognize the transit needs of the residents of Peterborough. In March

we announced, together with the federal government, \$195 million in public transit capital trust funding, committing to initiating a joint study of a possible Peterborough commuter rail line, accelerating the extension of the GO rail service from Lakeshore east to Bowmanville, launching GO bus service to Peterborough. The joint study on the introduction of a passenger rail service to Peterborough will be led by Metrolinx, the regional transit planning authority. The joint federal and provincial study is expected to begin this fall. I—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TRANSPORTATION OF GOODS

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a question for the Minister of Natural Resources. The 2009-19 Nipissing Forest forest management plan is currently being developed. The proposed route for moving logs out of the Nipissing Forest is through the village of Restoule, along Hawthorne Drive. Community members are very concerned about the safety of residents. Minister, will you review the proposed route to ensure that the concerns of the community are being considered?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I thank the member for the question. Absolutely, we're committed to work with the community. We recognize that there's a balance within the community, ensuring that there's safety in movement of the logs, and at the same time we want to ensure employment within the community and that there is a balance. So we are more than committed to work with the community to find the safest way to move the logs through, recognizing that there are limitations. We've had a number of meetings with the community. We have looked at alternative routes. I know they recently had another meeting at the beginning of the month with the community. I'm waiting for the results of that discussion. But I can assure the member that we will include safety as a top priority in any final decision and that the community will have input.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.
1130

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you for that response, Minister. Hawthorne Drive is a narrow road. It's quite steep in some places and includes a one-lane bridge. It goes right through the village of Restoule, very close to homes. Along the proposed route are the Restoule branch of the Canadian Legion and two churches.

Residents of all ages have written to me, they've written to you and they've written to Nipissing Forest Resource Management Inc. to demand that an alternative route be selected. The good news is, there are two possible routes that cross private property and are considered to be feasible alternatives. Minister, will you listen to the concerns of the community and push for the selection of one of the feasible alternative routes?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I'd like to reiterate: We are prepared to look at all resolutions. We recognize that the people of Restoule themselves want to have a logging

industry and that they just have some concerns around the safety of the delivery of those logs, and we share those concerns. So if we can have a resolution that really addresses all of those issues, then you have my commitment that we will be doing that. That consultation is taking place. It may be an alternative that we look to private land. We will investigate all sources for alternatives for the people of Restoule.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. On June 9, I raised the issue that the ministry is allowing Hamilton OW to cut off grandparents who are raising their grandchildren from temporary care assistance while grandparents in other municipalities continue to receive this assistance. The minister admitted, "Different municipalities have applied different rules, and I thank the member from the NDP for bringing this to my attention. We need to review it. We cannot apply rules in different areas differently." What has this minister done since June 9, when she recognized this problem about applying her ministry's rule differently?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: This is a very good question, and I thank the member for raising that with me. Yes, indeed it was true: Different municipalities would apply different rules. So I've asked—and it was done—the staff from the ministry to give extra training to the member municipalities to make sure that the rules are applied the same all over. This being said, I'm not asking the director of services to not use his or her judgment for special circumstances. The training has been done, and let's hope that the rules will be applied the same way in different municipalities.

Mr. Paul Miller: Minister, I'm not quite sure you answered the question. You're either going to apply the rules or you're not going to apply the rules. Are you going to cut everybody off or are you just going to cut some off? Today will be the second time my staff has met with Hamilton OW on this issue. How many times has this minister or her staff met with the OW management to let them know that they are applying the rules, as she said, "differently"? Minister, the time for studies, reviews and talk is over. Will you direct the Hamilton OW to reinstate temporary care assistance to Hamilton grandparents raising their grandchildren immediately? This is a disgrace.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I think that I was clear, but if someone wants to help me say it in clearer language than I did—I said that what the member raised with me, after investigation, was right, so I've asked staff from my ministry to make sure that they have written rules and that there was extra training to municipal members to make sure that the rules are applied the same all over the province. This being said, I am not asking the director of services in municipalities to not use his or her judgment in special circumstances.

WINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Bruce Crozier: My question is for the Minister of Government Services. According to the Wine Council of Ontario, when an Ontario consumer purchases local Ontario wines, that consumer is contributing \$8.48 per litre to the local economy. This is compared to buying a litre of imported wine, which only contributes some 67 cents. In the last fiscal year alone, the Ontario wine industry contributed \$529 million to the Ontario economy, a jump of more than 160% over the last decade. Clearly, the industry is having a significant impact on our economy.

Minister, as we face challenging times with our manufacturing sector, the Ontario wine industry is a welcome bright light. Knowing this, what exactly is the government doing to foster the continuing growth of Ontario's wine industry?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I want to thank the member for Essex for his question. He's been a tireless champion of the wineries in his riding and across Ontario. That's why he recently won the wine council award for advocacy.

And he's right: The Ontario grape and wine industry is an important contributor to our economy, and it has grown over the past decade to now support almost 7,000 jobs. Since 2004, the McGuinty government has invested more than \$25 million in the grape and wine industry, including funding for marketing and research for Ontario wineries that sell VQA wines to the LCBO. The government has also established a wine secretariat, chaired by the member from St. Catharines. Without a doubt, this government wants to ensure the grape and wine industry continues to be strong and viable in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I want to thank the minister for providing some insight about what we're doing to strengthen Ontario's wine industry. However, along with being a significant player in the economy, Ontario's wine industry also plays a major role in this province's tourism sector. In fact, Ontario's wine regions attract almost a million tourists annually. I know the government implemented a by-the-glass liquor licence in May of this year, allowing Ontario wineries and breweries to sell and serve their wine and beer for consumption in single servings from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. However, in order to enhance the tourism experience, wineries asked that the hours be extended beyond the 6 p.m. cut-off, allowing tourists to extend their visit to the wineries.

Can the minister inform the House as to whether you've listened to the concerns of our wineries in their efforts to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm pleased to announce that we have listened. How can you have an advocate like this without listening?

I'm pleased to announce that, effective August 13, 2008, the hours of sale and service under the by-the-glass liquor licence have been extended to 9 p.m. This change

was introduced after broad consultation with stakeholders and is designed to further enhance the ability of Ontario wineries and breweries to provide a first-rate tourist experience.

We're committed to that. We're pleased to make this change. We believe the change will help the tourism industry. Again, I want to applaud the member from Essex for his wonderful advocacy on behalf of his wineries.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is for the Premier. Premier, in 2005, your government ordered the region of Halton to grow, and grow they did. Milton is the fastest-growing community in Canada, but your plan was sloppy and somewhat reckless. Halton doesn't have adequate health care facilities. The new Oakville hospital is delayed and the much-needed expansion is not even on the books. The situation is so dire that the chair of Halton region has just tabled a motion to suspend all further development in Halton until your government fulfills its promises. Premier, do you understand the severity of this situation?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. David Caplan: In fact, we are engaged in the largest expansion of hospital capital facilities this province has ever seen—over 100 projects. And I regret to inform you, when this member was on this side of the House, he did not take even a moment's notice or any bit of effort to get them moving along. It was this government, this Premier, this Ministry of Health, working with our colleagues in infrastructure, that have got these projects going.

I'm very proud that we're seeing in Halton region a move toward a new Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital. I'm pleased that we're seeing this expansion right across the province. We are going through further rounds of capital planning. I have said to the member in the past, and I'll say in the future, that we want to get to all of the various sites right across the province—

1140

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I want the people of Halton to understand this government's planning process, although "government planning" is an oxymoron, looking at their record.

They have made no less than four announcements in the past about their grand plans for the Halton hospital. They alerted the media, made colourful signs and smiled for the photographers, but when they decided to stall the project, delay it for a year, they made no announcements. They hid from view and they made excuses. Now the municipal government is threatening to stop issuing building permits until you act, until you fulfill your promises.

If Halton completely stops growing, the negative economic impact and social effects will be huge. What immediate action are you going to take to solve this issue for the people of Halton, and when will they get the health care that they deserve?

Hon. David Caplan: In fact, base funding for Halton health sciences has increased by almost 53%, a recognition that we need to be able to provide additional resources. I want to contrast that with this member and the avowed position of him and his party to cut \$3 billion out of our health care system. Undoubtedly, that would affect Halton health sciences; undoubtedly, that would see a reduction in patient service that I know that Oakville and Halton residents desperately would not want to see.

I know that I was, along with Kevin Flynn, able to provide the deed to a wonderful site that will house the new Halton health sciences building. I know that we've moved along, through the great work that Infrastructure Ontario has done, to be able to realize these kinds of capital projects. I know that these take time and I know that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. New question.

TANNING SALONS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. A Canadian Cancer Society report points to the risk posed by tanning beds and the need for stronger regulation of tanning salons. More than 50,000 Ontario youth use tanning beds, which contribute to skin cancer. Skin cancer is the second most common cancer among young people. The Canadian Cancer Society report found that 60% of Toronto salons did not prevent youth under the age of 16 from using the tanning beds as they are supposed to under Health Canada guidelines.

Will the government heed the cancer society's recommendation to ban the provision of tanning salon services to youth under 18?

Hon. David Caplan: To the Minister of Health Promotion.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I thank the member opposite for the question. The Ministry of Health Promotion is aware of the concerns about the impact of exposure to ultraviolet radiation in tanning salons and its links to skin cancer.

The regulation of tanning beds falls under the federal Radiation Emitting Devices Act, which is administered by Health Canada. Health Canada guidelines for tanning salon owners, operators and users do not recommend the use of tanning beds for children under the age of 16. They also state that, depending on provincial and territorial regulations, a minor may require written parental consent for using tanning beds.

I believe it's important that we look at this as a very important issue. I certainly believe that parents also have a very important role to play in ensuring that children under the age of 16 do not use tanning beds.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: We don't disagree that the federal government has a role to play, but so does the Ministry of Health Promotion. You could put forward a

bill that addresses the need to ban advertising to youth, you could improve staff training at the salon to make sure they are aware of UV damage, you could create a registry of all tanning salons, and you could better monitor the use of those salons by youth, just as examples coming from the other side of the House. It is up to your government to be proactive on those issues.

When does the minister plan to take this public health issue seriously and bring forward a comprehensive plan of action within her mandate to protect the health of the people of Ontario?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: The Ministry of Health Promotion is committed to supporting the importance of public awareness about the use of tanning salons. As well, I would like to recognize my colleague Khalil Ramal, the member from London-Fanshawe, for his leadership on this issue. He introduced a private member's bill, Bill 83, which is currently before a standing committee. We're looking forward to hearing what the committee has to say about the bill.

We are very, very aware of the importance of keeping our children healthy, and we will continue to look at this issue. It's a very important issue to us and to me as the Minister of Health Promotion. We will continue to work to increase public awareness about the use of and the risks associated with tanning beds.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended.

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition that has been submitted to me by a number of the surgeons at Credit Valley hospital, from signatures collected from among their patients. It reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to

'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

It's an excellent petition. I'm pleased to sign and support it and to ask page Timothy to carry it for me.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas innocent people are being victimized by the growing number of unlawful firearms in our communities; and

"Whereas police officers, military personnel and lawfully licensed persons are the only people allowed to possess firearms; and

"Whereas a growing number of unlawful firearms are transported, smuggled and found in motor vehicles; and

"Whereas impounding motor vehicles and suspending driver's licences of persons possessing unlawful firearms in motor vehicles would aid the police in their efforts to make our streets safer;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 56, entitled the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act, 2008, into law, so that we can reduce the number of crimes involving firearms in our communities."

I support this petition and I affix my name to it.

STROKE SURVIVORS

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is a complete lack of government-funded outpatient therapy for stroke survivors upon discharge from hospital in the city of Cambridge, Ontario; and

"Whereas, on October 29, 2004, a state-of-the-art government-funded outpatient hospital program, which included therapy programs for stroke survivors discharged from the hospital, was cut by the Cambridge Memorial Hospital due to a lack of provincial funds;

"We, the undersigned stroke survivors, caregivers, family members and friends of stroke survivors in Cambridge, Ontario, draw your attention to the following:

"That the absence of a government-funded outpatient therapy program leaves many stroke survivors who are unable to pay for private therapy with a gap in services. As a result of this lack of therapy, many survivors despair and regress; and

"That therapy is critical to restoring a survivor's ability to function and become rehabilitated and reintegrated in the community, as opposed to being forced to enter a long-term-care facility, thus saving the system money while greatly improving the quality of life for stroke survivors and their families; and

"That the outpatient therapy is relatively inexpensive. A full-time physiotherapist and occupational therapist and half-time speech-language pathologist and social

worker required to deliver the service cost less per day than one bed in the hospital;

"Therefore, we request that the Ontario government give priority to restoring a government-funded outpatient therapy program in Cambridge, Ontario, to provide desperately needed rehabilitation for stroke survivors (and others with similar needs) after discharge from hospital."

As I agree with the contents of this petition, I affix my name thereto.

1150

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased to accept a petition that's addressed to the Parliament of Ontario from among the parishioners of our Polish church in Mississauga, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the legacy of Pope John Paul II reflects his lifelong commitment to international understanding, peace and the defence of equality and human rights;

"Whereas his legacy has an all-embracing meaning that is particularly relevant to Canada's multi-faith and multicultural traditions;

"Whereas, as one of the great spiritual leaders of contemporary times, Pope John Paul II visited Ontario during his pontificate of more than 25 years and, on his visits, was enthusiastically greeted by Ontario's diverse religious and cultural communities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to grant speedy passage into law of the private member's bill An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day."

I'm also pleased to acknowledge the efforts of my colleague from Newmarket-Aurora to support this petition, and ask page Michael to carry it for me.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition with hundreds and hundreds of names on it. It's compiled by the good people at Global Pet Foods on Eglinton Avenue in my riding. They signed this petition in support of Bill 50, the Provincial Animal Welfare Act.

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act has not been updated since 1919;

"Whereas Bill 50 would require all veterinarians to report suspected abuse and neglect, protecting veterinarians from liability;

"Whereas it would allow the OSPCA to inspect and investigate places where animals are kept;

"Whereas the bill would prohibit the training of animals to fight;

"Whereas Bill 50 would allow the OSPCA to inspect roadside zoos;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 50, entitled the Provincial

Animal Welfare Act, 2008, to protect our animal friends.”

I support this and I give it to page Lauren, who I'm sure is an animal lover too.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There seem to be no further petitions. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1152 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

Mr. Ted Arnott: In the past 18 years in which I've been privileged to serve in this Ontario Legislature, I've always endeavoured to work closely with municipal councils and staff in my riding. That's why I was so glad to learn last week that the county of Wellington has been acknowledged as one of Canada's top 100 employers by the national news magazine Maclean's.

In the Maclean's article, the county was given credit for its offices in a heritage area close to daycare facilities, transit subsidies and secure bike parking, as well as a generous pension plan.

Being recognized as one of the best employers in Canada means the county of Wellington will be better able to retain its existing top-notch staff performers and in the future, as new opportunities arise, attract the very best people. This translates into an even higher standard of service to the ratepayers and the people of Wellington county.

We in Wellington county and Halton Hills have never been ones to rest on our laurels. In both the public and private sectors, through visionary planning, dedicated persistence and a high degree of ethical and social responsibility, we set the bar high, strive our best to cross it and then set it higher still.

The county of Wellington will celebrate this well-deserved accolade, and it will inspire our staff to continue to be the best they can be, making us all very proud in the process.

SKILLS TRAINING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I would like to talk with people in western Mississauga and all across Ontario about this province's commitment to help displaced workers in communities get back on their feet. The cornerstone of this commitment is second career, an innovative program to assist workers who have been laid off. Second career will help individuals get new skills necessary to compete and to succeed in this new economy.

In June, Ontario launched second career, which will provide \$355 million to help 20,000 laid-off workers train for long-term, high-skill occupations that are in demand in their communities. This investment also partners each of these participants with an Employment

Ontario counsellor who can provide one-on-one, individualized counselling to establish a return-to-work action plan that reflects the needs, the experience and the education of each participant. Ontario's commitment to workers and their families is also seen in the \$500-million advanced manufacturing fund that has maintained or created 4,000 jobs since it was implemented.

These job growth strategies are just two examples of Ontario's commitment to workers throughout the province. We understand the challenges of this new economy, and we will continue to work with Ontarians to succeed in it.

WHEELABRATOR

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I rise in the House today to congratulate Wheelabrator Group in Burlington. Wheelabrator has just celebrated its 100th year in business, all in Burlington. Wheelabrator Group is the world's largest, most experienced and trusted brand name in surface preparation and finishing. They are an impressive example of taking a difficult time in our economy and finding the silver lining.

Wheelabrator's cutting edge technologies have reduced costs and energy in-house for the benefit of their customers. They have successfully reduced their corporate carbon footprint and that of their clients.

I was proud to join with them in their celebration of this impressive milestone, and I want to wish them yet another 100 years of success in Burlington.

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

SOUTIENS À L'EMPLOI

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We know that we have among us today people from across Ontario from the OSSTF, who are here in order to lobby all of us, on both sides of the House, with regard to issues that are important not only to them and their members, but to parents and kids as well, in regard to the schools and universities they represent.

J'ai eu le plaisir aujourd'hui d'avoir une rencontre avec du monde de la région d'Ottawa et de la région de Prescott-Russell, et de parler exactement des défis qu'ils ont dans l'ouvrage qu'ils ont à faire, l'ouvrage des professeurs et de ceux en soutien qui fait affaire avec le soutien pour les jeunes et les enfants en difficulté.

Il y a beaucoup d'ouvrage à faire et il y a un manque de ressources, ce qui veut dire qu'à la fin de la journée, ces jeunes-là n'ont pas l'appui dont ils ont besoin pour être capables d'avancer et ils n'ont pas ce dont ils ont besoin comme soutien pour devenir des pleins membres de notre société quand ils finissent le système scolaire.

On a eu la chance de parler avec ceux de l'Université d'Ottawa qui ont décidé récemment de se joindre à l'OSSTF et les défis qu'eux autres ont dans le secteur de l'université. Ce qui est vraiment intéressant, c'est qu'il y a un lien entre l'un et l'autre. Si on apprend quelque

chose aujourd'hui de ces deux bords de l'allée, c'est de prendre ce qu'ils nous disent sérieusement et de regarder comment on peut donner le soutien, parce que ce n'est pas juste pour eux autres, c'est pour les enfants et ceux qui les soutiennent dans l'ouvrage qu'ils font chaque jour.

On behalf of the New Democratic caucus, we want to say welcome to all the members of the OSSTF. Welcome to the assembly, and we'll see you a little bit later.

YOUTH PROGRAMS

Mrs. Laura Albanese: This past weekend, I had the pleasure of attending a local event in my riding of York South–Weston where I had the opportunity to meet a very interesting group of youth named Reckless. The group, notwithstanding its name, sends a positive message of friendship and non-violence that engages youth to think about the choices they make.

The group was established with the help of the Trethewey “Our Expressions” organization in the Martha Eaton Way high-rises, in an area that has been known to be a tougher neighbourhood. The Trethewey organization offers youth the opportunity to engage in meaningful programs that challenge them to reach their full potential. The Trethewey organization runs a number of programs, which include homework clubs, recreational activity and reading advancement. There is also a very strong focus on communicating a message, a story or a life experience.

I take this opportunity today to highlight Michael, Ricardo, Chayo and Trevon because of their choice to stay active and engage others with a positive message. They tell a story of residents in the riding of York South–Weston who are working hard to create stronger, safer and more resilient communities for everyone, and I encourage them to continue.

MALLORY FAMILY

Mr. Jim Wilson: I rise today to congratulate the Mallory family of Essa township for reaching the summit of Mount Everest at over 8,848 metres.

The family of five, including Dan Mallory, his two sons, Adam and Alan, his daughter, Laura, and wife, Barbara, set out on this courageous journey in early April of this year. Only taking the family six weeks to complete, they all, except for Barbara, who was injured on the trek, reached the summit on May 25 and 26. On completion, the family joined the list of only 3,000 people in the world to have completed such a feat. In addition, Laura set a new record for being the youngest Canadian female, at 20 years old, to make it to the summit. This outstanding achievement is a testimony to the Mallorys' talent, dedication and courage.

In addition to being avid climbers, the family has participated in a number of marathons, triathlons and adventure races throughout the world.

While in part they say they do it for the adrenaline rush, the family has the much more humble purpose of inspiring others to reach beyond expectations. They strive to encourage young people to challenge themselves in everything they do and to never limit themselves with preconceptions.

On behalf of the people of Simcoe–Grey, and I'm sure all members of this Legislature, I want to once again congratulate the Mallory family on this amazing achievement and thank them for being such an inspiration to so many.

FIRE PREVENTION WEEK

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge Fire Prevention Week in Ontario. This year's theme is preventing home fires.

In June, our government took steps to minimize the risks caused by home fires by introducing changes to the building code that would make sprinklers mandatory in all new multi-unit residential occupancies of more than three storeys beginning in 2010. Requiring residential sprinklers in new buildings three storeys and higher will save lives and protect families for generations to come. It's an important and meaningful legacy for this government.

Last month in Minneapolis, the International Code Council, an association dedicated to building safety and fire prevention in the United States, overwhelmingly backed building code changes that would make residential sprinklers mandatory in all new one- and two-family dwellings.

Our government has done the right thing with respect to high-rise residences, and I want Ontario to continue to move forward in making all businesses and buildings safer in the future.

1510

Firefighters are vital to keeping our community safe, and our government recognizes the hard work and dedication that firefighters across this province demonstrate every day. Every day across Ontario, firefighters put themselves at risk. They put themselves in harm's way to protect us. Our government recognizes that Ontario's dedicated firefighters are the backbone of safety and security within our community. Please join me in actively promoting fire prevention strategies in your communities this week.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL

Mr. David Oraziotti: Today I'd like to highlight an important investment that our government has made to support the economy in my community and improve health care across the province. Last week in Sault Ste. Marie, I had the honour of announcing that the McGuinty government is supporting the development of the first 3D hospital geospatial information system in northern Ontario. We've committed \$142,000 to the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre to help them with the creation of the

first system that will track disease outbreaks in real time. Hospital equipment, patients and staff will be connected to this unique technology, enabling faster and better patient safety decisions. The new system could help slow the spread of infectious diseases in a hospital, while creating a value-added product for use throughout the health care sector.

Here's what Tom Vair, the director of the innovation centre, had to say about this exciting breakthrough: "In the future, we hope that hospitals, long-term-care facilities and other health facilities will be able to use this system to help support and reduce the potential impact of future disease outbreaks." Tom and his team are a shining example of the ingenuity and creativity that is needed to ensure that Sault Ste. Marie and indeed, all Ontarians, succeed.

For our part, the McGuinty government is supporting and encouraging innovators like Tom by aggressively pursuing growing sectors of the new economy to boost local development while attracting and retaining highly skilled workers in Sault Ste. Marie and across the province.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Bill Mauro: All Canadians, including those living in Ontario, deserve to be treated equally. The federal system of taxes and programs takes more than \$20 billion from the Ontario economy every year, redistributing those funds elsewhere in the country. That means \$1,800 per Ontarian is transferred from our province to other parts of Canada.

Ontario's economy is being challenged by global economic forces and a slowing American economy. Ontario needs a true partner in the federal government. In recent years, we have made some progress—immigrants who have come to Ontario now have better access to services—but Ontario continues to be treated unfairly. Laid-off workers get \$4,600 less in employment insurance than they would get if they lived in another part of Canada. Federal health care money is supposed to be divided equally among all Canadians, but right now Ontario is shortchanged by \$773 million. Of the \$934 million the federal government spends for regional and economic development in Canada, only 4% is in Ontario. And under the federal government's Building Canada infrastructure fund, Ontario gets almost \$1 billion less than its fair share.

Canadians will elect a new federal government soon. One third of all the seats in Parliament will come from Ontario. We're asking Ontarians to raise the issue of fairness with all candidates. As our Premier has said, we have a rare opportunity to make our voice heard and to work together to make our province and our country prosper.

In Thunder Bay, we have seen what can be accomplished with the province and the community working together. Our government has recently made substantial

local investments totalling close to \$400 million over five years, and targeted funding for health care, seniors, innovative research, community safety, education and infrastructure projects—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

INTERNATIONAL PLOWING MATCH

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Today I would like to acknowledge all the volunteers, exhibitors and visitors to this year's 2008 International Plowing Match. From September 16 to September 20, the farm of Wayne and Wendy McKague was transformed into one of the largest outdoor farming events in this country. The McKague farm is located outside of Teeswater, in the heart of Bruce county.

My colleague Carol Mitchell, the member from Huron—Bruce, and I have had the opportunity to be involved with the plowing match since 2005, when Bruce county learned they would host the IPM. Since then, over 2,000 people have volunteered in some way with the IPM, from chairing committees to stamping hands at the entrance.

At this time, I would like to mention one special volunteer: Jack Riley. Mr. Riley was the chair of the IPM and oversaw almost every aspect of this week-long event. Due to these great volunteers, over 650 exhibitors had booths or displays at the match. These booths showcased local culture and tourist attractions, farm equipment, animals and so much more. There were also over 200 competitors participating in the plowing competitions.

I had the opportunity to be at the plowing match all week and met with many of the 94,500 visitors. Highlights for me included seeing the world's longest picnic table, viewing the antique tractors, participating in the opening day parade and ceremonies and meeting all the people as they stopped by my booth to view the collection of IPM posters that I have been collecting since 1987.

Even though it rained at the beginning of the match, I am pleased to announce the Teeswater plowing match was a great success. The IPM officials are hoping to donate any profits realized to local charities in Bruce county.

Again, congratulations to Bruce county for a successful IPM.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the October 7, 2008, report of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 107(f)9, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

APOLOGY ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR
LA PRÉSENTATION D'EXCUSES

Mr. Bentley moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 108, An Act respecting apologies / Projet de loi
108, Loi concernant la présentation d'excuses.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The minister for a short statement?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: During ministerial statements.

TAXATION AMENDMENT ACT
(EQUIPMENT PURCHASED FOR
PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES), 2008LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES IMPÔTS
(ACHAT D'APPAREILS POUR
LES PERSONNES HANDICAPÉES)

Mr. Murdoch moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 109, An Act to provide a tax credit for the purchase of equipment or devices for persons with disabilities / Projet de loi 109, Loi prévoyant un crédit d'impôt pour l'achat d'appareils ou de dispositifs pour les personnes handicapées.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: When I was campaigning last time, a year ago for the election, there didn't seem to be a lot for people with disabilities. This is one of the ideas that came up then, and I hope that everyone in the House will be able to support this when we debate it for second reading.

MASTER'S COLLEGE
AND SEMINARY ACT, 2008

Mr. Delaney moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr10, An Act respecting Master's College and Seminary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 85, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

APOLOGY LEGISLATION

LOI SUR LA PRÉSENTATION D'EXCUSES

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I rise in the House today on behalf of the McGuinty government to introduce legislation that would, if passed, allow people to apologize for a mistake or wrongdoing without fear that the apology would be used in lawsuits against them.

Je suis sûr que tous les députés reconnaîtront que la présentation d'excuses sincères après la commission d'un acte répréhensible ou d'une erreur est une réaction humaine naturelle. Cette loi contribuera à éliminer les obstacles juridiques à nos instincts naturels et donnera libre court à l'expression sincère et importante d'excuses. C'est la bonne chose à faire.

I am sure that all members of the House will recognize that a sincere apology for a wrongdoing or a mistake is a part of our natural human interaction. This legislation will help remove the legal barriers to our natural instincts and allow for that very important and sincere expression. It is the right thing to do.

Apology legislation, though, is not new to members of this House. Earlier this year, the member for Sault Ste. Marie introduced similar legislation in a private member's bill. David Oraziotti's private member's bill led the way to the government's proposed apology legislation. He has directed attention to a very important issue. His extensive research and hard work have brought us here today, and I'd like to acknowledge and thank him for the hard work that he has done in advocacy of this bill.

1520

While I'm acknowledging, let me acknowledge the chair of the County and District Law Presidents' Association, Randall Boccock, and Jamie Trimble, the president of the Ontario Bar Association, who are both in the east gallery.

Dans l'état actuel du droit, les particuliers et les organismes hésitent peut-être à présenter des excuses pour un accident ou un acte répréhensible, par peur qu'elles ne soient utilisées comme preuve de responsabilité dans un procès ou d'autres procédures civiles.

Under current law, people and organizations might be reluctant to apologize out of fear that their words will be used as evidence of liability in a lawsuit and other civil proceedings. We know that professional organizations and associations sometimes advise their members not to apologize and not to recognize errors that may have been made because of the liability that is thought to go along with that. This reluctance to apologize harms relations between people. It can lead to bitterness and prolonged litigation. The proposed Apology Act would remove this legal barrier to offering apologies. It would allow individuals and organizations, such as hospitals and other public institutions, to apologize for an accident or wrongdoing, including admitting fault, without that apology

being used as evidence of liability in a civil legal proceeding under provincial law.

The Apology Act would apply to courts, tribunals, arbitrators and other decision-making bodies. It would apply to legal proceedings under provincial law, such as civil lawsuits, administrative proceedings and professional discipline matters. It would not apply to criminal proceedings, which are federal matters, and it would not apply to prosecutions under the Provincial Offences Act. The Apology Act would not affect a victim's right to sue or their right to compensation for harm done. It would not allow a wrongdoer to escape the consequences of the incident.

Apologies have been promoted and supported in many jurisdictions as a way to reduce suffering, encourage healing and facilitate dispute resolution. Over 30 US states and most Australian states have enacted some form of apology legislation. British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba in Canada have also done so.

In Ontario, we place great value on apologies. I urge the members of this assembly to join me in supporting the legislation we're introducing here today. It would give clear definition to how apologies affect liability. It would encourage the resolution of conflicts and promote healing and reconciliation. It would contribute to building a stronger, healthier and more civil society for all Ontarians. Saying "sorry" for a mistake or wrongdoing is the right thing to do.

APOLOGY LEGISLATION

Hon. David Caplan: I rise today to comment on the apology legislation just introduced by my colleague Minister Bentley. From the perspective of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, it's important that Ontario patients have all the relevant information about their health care, even in circumstances where harm has occurred. We know from discussions with patients and affected family members that they need three key pieces of information communicated to them when harm occurs as a result of health care provided. First, they need to know what happened. Second, what changes will be made to decrease the likelihood that such an event will ever happen again? And third, an apology.

The apology helps to build and re-establish rapport and trust between patients and their families and health care providers, and supports open and honest communication. As important, the apology can often aid a patient's healing both physically and psychologically. This proposed legislation promotes open, honest and timely communication between patients and their health care providers to rebuild the trust so essential to the patient-provider relationship. Openness, transparency and honesty are the foundations for achieving a culture of patient safety in Ontario, and we are working hard to reach this goal. This legislation and other important, significant actions taken by our government represent a seismic shift toward a more open relationship between patients and those they rely on to provide their care. Just

recently, we launched a new public website reporting on patient safety indicators. This initiative is part of a comprehensive plan to create an unprecedented level of transparency in Ontario's hospitals. Finally, the new amendments to regulation 965 under the Public Hospitals Act that came into effect on July 1, 2008, require hospitals to disclose critical incidents to affected patients.

In conclusion, saying "sorry" for a medical mishap or an adverse event is simply the right thing to do. With legislation in place to prevent that apology being used as evidence of liability or fault in a legal proceeding, people or organizations will be less reluctant to apologize. Then the healing can begin and the trust can be rebuilt that much sooner.

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I rise in the House today to mark Child Abuse Prevention Month in Ontario. In the month of October, the purple ribbon campaign provides an opportunity for each of us to remember our responsibility when it comes to reporting child abuse and neglect and to speak up for those who are unable to speak for themselves.

It's our moral obligation and our legal duty to promptly report any reasonable suspicion that a child is or may be in need of protection as a result of abuse or neglect. When it comes to professionals who work with children, they may be subject to a penalty if they fail to report—professionals such as doctors and nurses, teachers and child care workers, coaches, club leaders and others.

Abuse can be physical, sexual or emotional. Neglect occurs when a caregiver fails to provide a child's basic needs, such as enough food, sleep, safety, supervision, clothing or medical treatment. It's important to note that one doesn't have to be certain that a child is being abused or neglected before reporting the situation to a children's aid society. If a person has reasonable grounds to believe a child is at risk, they must report their concerns immediately.

Our government takes its responsibility to children very seriously. Together with many dedicated organizations and individuals, we work very hard to serve the more than 29,000 children in the care of Ontario's children's aid societies. Together, we've been working to help more of our vulnerable children find a safe, permanent home, we've strengthened our child protection laws to create more options for children in the care of children's aid societies to be placed in a permanent home, and we've introduced changes to make Ontario's children's aid societies more accountable and sustainable so they will be there for children who need them in years to come.

We took another important step when we recently announced that, effective this past July, children and youth in care will benefit from funding equivalent to the Ontario child benefit. These funds will be flowed through children's aid societies to provide supports that include

tutoring, skills building and recreational activities, as well as to establish and build savings programs for older youths to access when they leave care.

As the Minister of Children and Youth Services, I'm passionate about seeing that every young person has the opportunity to reach his or her full potential, especially for some of the most vulnerable kids in Ontario. This initiative is another way we're providing more opportunities for these kids and lessening the risk that they may experience poverty later in life.

As citizens, we must be on the lookout at all times for signs of abuse and neglect and just as vigilant in reporting them. Last year, with the help of teachers, health professionals, neighbours, social workers and police officers, Ontario's children's aid societies handled more than 160,000 calls about child protection concerns. By working together, we can put an end to child abuse. That's why last week, I asked for unanimous consent for the members to wear a purple ribbon this month to create awareness of this crucial issue, and I'm asking all Ontarians today and every day to stand up and speak out on behalf of abused children. It is our opportunity to use our voices to protect the safety and innocence that every child deserves, to give these kids every opportunity for a better future.

1530

APOLOGY LEGISLATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm pleased to rise today and speak on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus regarding the Apology Act. I addressed this issue at some length in May when it was first presented as private member's Bill 59 by the member from Sault Ste. Marie. I supported the bill in principle then, and I'll continue to do so, but I do have a number of reservations.

On the face of it, the act is quite simple and straightforward. I certainly do agree that by introducing such legislation, an opportunity is provided for parties to resolve disputes without having to go to court. This of course would seem to be beneficial for all, adding the possibility of saving money, time and much distress. However, there is a contrary view and I need to express that here. I would again like to refer to a paper written by Benjamin Bathgate and Joseph C. D'Angelo called *Better Safe Than Sorry? The Role of Apologies in Litigation*. The authors, both lawyers, raise the possibility that legislation such as this could provide for a kind of trivialization of apologies: "Another concern is that apologies can become trivialized and meaningless if the defendant knows that they will not be admissible and the mere act of apologizing could either prevent a lawsuit from being commenced, or reduce the amount of potential damages for which the defendant is liable."

The answer to this concern is that (a) human nature being what it is, if the defendant truly believes he has done nothing wrong, he is unlikely to apologize; and (b) if the plaintiff believes the apology is insincere, he is unlikely to accept it.

So there is a real concern here that we could end up with a boilerplate apology that would lack any real significance. When an apology is presented merely with the hope of reducing an unwanted result, it takes away the humanity of the premise upon which the bill was introduced in the first place.

Furthermore, the bill states that an apology will not be admissible in a civil action as an admission of liability nor will it void a policy of insurance. But what about a situation such as a serious motor vehicle accident, for example, which could give rise to both a civil action and criminal charges being laid? If an apology is rendered, theoretically, it can be admissible in the criminal proceeding leading to a conviction. The criminal conviction could then be entered into the subsequent civil action and therefore have the effect of providing an inadvertent admission of liability as well as voiding the contract of insurance rendering the defendant personally liable for damages.

So what seems to be very straightforward and simple on the face of it, can have unintended consequences. That's why we in the PC caucus would urge the government to get this bill into committee and travel on it so that we can gain the benefit of the many interested parties who may wish to have some comments on this bill and we can have some direct knowledge of the possible ramifications of legislation such as this.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity.

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I am pleased to stand up on behalf of the PC caucus to respond regarding child abuse awareness month. Sadly, this is a necessity. But it is a necessity and so we must address it. Every Ontarian has a responsibility to be aware of and report child abuse. That's the law. When a child is denied the basic necessities of life, that is abuse—plain and simple. One quarter of all Canadian children are victims of abuse or neglect before they turn the age of 16.

The McGuinty government must find out where the gaps are in our system that allowed Katelynn Sampson to be murdered. How was she allowed to be placed with a couple with criminal convictions, something that could be traced? Why did no one notice she didn't come to school for weeks and weeks and weeks? The death of Katelynn is the ultimate symbol of our failure as a society and a government to protect every child. If we cannot protect children like Katelynn, how can we protect anyone? We all have to do better.

APOLOGY LEGISLATION

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker. New Democrats are very, very cautious about the government's Apology Act—not that this government doesn't have a whole lot to apologize for to workers across this province. But let's understand what this legislation does. It doesn't simply bar the apology, the "I'm sorry," from

being an admission of guilt but would bar an outright admission of liability or responsibility.

It's one thing to go up to a pedestrian who has been mowed down, lying on the road bleeding and bones broken, and say, "I'm sorry." One can be sorry about their condition without having been in any way responsible for their being in that condition. But it's another thing to say, "I'm sorry that I've been drinking far too much and that I went through that red light and that I was speeding." Innocent victims have a difficult enough time in the system as it is, fighting insurance companies and high-priced defence lawyers, without being denied the opportunity to use a clear admission of responsibility, liability, in the course of pursuing justice.

Let's also understand what the motivation is here. The sponsors of this legislation are the big insurance companies including, in no small way, the self-insurers of the medical profession. They have a strong interest in this legislation because it's designed to blunt or dull the effectiveness of a plaintiff's case. The mediation industry, which all too often recommends apologies—sincere or insincere—in an effort to accelerate the settlement process will now have one less hurdle.

New Democrats are sticking with innocent victims on this one. And I tell you, my colleagues in the OBA had better come forward with more than a few plaintiffs' lawyers supporting this, the people who fight for innocent accident victims, if they expect anything less than some uphill battle when it comes to the opposition party here at Queen's Park.

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my pleasure to respond to the child abuse statement by the Minister of Children and Youth Services, and I have to say that we would agree completely, given the reality of the sickening situation in Ontario where children are facing abuse in many situations, in many instances. In fact, we've seen what has happened over the last couple of years and the tragedies in young lives like that of Katelynn Sampson, the stabbing murder of Jared Osidacz, and the physical abuse and complete neglect in the death of young Randal Dooley. All of these things are sickening, sickening tragedies in the province of Ontario, and I think everyone would agree.

In fact, the minister talked in her remarks about raising our voices and making sure that situations of abuse are brought to the attention of the proper authorities. I have to say my colleague Peter Kormos, the member for Welland, and myself have raised our voices, and we've asked the Ombudsman to look into what it was that failed the young Katelynn Sampson, how she was able to be put at risk and ended up losing her life in the system in Ontario that was supposed to be caring for her when she was in a vulnerable situation.

The reality is that there are many situations in Ontario that put children at risk, and that the abuse of children can be pointed to many, many things, and this government has control and responsibility over some of those

things. In the minister's statement she talked about things like making sure children have enough food. How are children going to have enough food if their parents are living in dire poverty? How are they going to have enough food if their parents are being laid off because there are no jobs or there are no jobs to go to that pay a decent wage in this province? How are children going to have enough food if this government doesn't start acting on the poverty that we have in this province?

The minister also talked about clothing in her statement. She talked about the need for children to have proper clothing. They cut the clothing allowance for children for back to school. What is their excuse for that kind of abuse of children in our communities? That's what I want to know.

You know, the reality is that the government has a lot of responsibility when it comes to some of the root causes of the abuse that occurs against children in our communities. They can take some responsibility. They have to move on issues like poverty. All you have to do is look at reports coming out of the University of Western Ontario a couple years ago that tied very clearly the increasing poverty rates with the increasing caseloads of children's aid societies. The minister is shaking her head. Yes, it's true, she knows that it's true, and that's why it's even more incumbent upon them to deal not only with child poverty but with the poverty of families in this province, because the reality is that much of the pain and anguish that children face is because of their circumstances, and the circumstances are not being dealt with by this government.

DEFERRED VOTES

LEGISLATIVE REFORM

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on government notice of motion number 86. Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1540 to 1545.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members please take their seats.

Mr. McMeekin has moved government notice of motion number 86. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Dhillon, Vic	Moridi, Reza
Albanese, Laura	Dickson, Joe	Murdoch, Bill
Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Naqvi, Yasir
Balkissoon, Bas	Gravelle, Michael	Oraziotti, David
Bartolucci, Rick	Hoy, Pat	Pendergast, Leeanna
Bentley, Christopher	Jaczek, Helena	Qadri, Shafiq
Brown, Michael A.	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramal, Khalil
Brownell, Jim	Kular, Kuldip	Ruprecht, Tony
Bryant, Michael	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	Mangat, Amrit	Smith, Monique
Carroll, Aileen	Mauvo, Bill	Smitherman, George
Chan, Michael	McMeekin, Ted	Sousa, Charles
Colle, Mike	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Crozier, Bruce	Milloy, John	Wilkinson, John
Delaney, Bob	Mitchell, Carol	Wynne, Kathleen O.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those opposed?

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Bisson, Gilles
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Gélinas, France
Hillier, Randy

Horwath, Andrea
Jones, Sylvia
Kormos, Peter
Marchese, Rosario
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul
Prue, Michael

Runciman, Robert W.
Savoline, Joyce
Shurman, Peter
Sterling, Norman W.
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 45; the nays are 20.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The ayes being 45 and the nays being 20, I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I will remind the members that this motion that has just passed takes effect at midnight this Friday, and remind the members then that they will be returning to the House next Wednesday at 9 a.m.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Nine a.m. According to the new standing orders that were passed, it's 9 a.m. on Wednesday.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Newmarket–Aurora has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given yesterday by the Minister of Labour concerning the regulatory burden on small and medium-sized employers. This matter will be debated today at 5:45 p.m.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to ask the House for unanimous consent for members to wear a ribbon in celebration of World Animal Week, which runs from October 4 to October 10.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

1550

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROVINCIAL ANIMAL WELFARE ACT, 2008

LOI ONTARIENNE DE 2008 SUR LE BIEN-ÊTRE DES ANIMAUX

Mr. Bartolucci moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 50, An Act to amend the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act / Projet de loi 50,

Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société de protection des animaux de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I stand today in support of Bill 50, a bill I am proud to have introduced that proposes to amend the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act.

This week is World Animal Week, an important time for all who are dedicated to the care and welfare of animals. Mahatma Gandhi probably said it best when he said, "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated." The aim of this legislation is simple: to better protect Ontario's animals from mistreatment and abuse, and to greatly improve the way our animals are treated.

Currently, Ontario is in last place in Canada when it comes to animal protection legislation. If passed, Bill 50 will ensure we go from worst to first. The OSPCA Act, as it currently stands, has been in effect for 90 years. Back then, the First World War had just ended and the welfare of both animals and children were the responsibility of the humane society. Over these years, the OSPCA Act has helped protect many animals. But in too many cases, it has not allowed the extra steps to be taken that are needed to protect them the best.

It is wrong, for example, that exotic species are confined in roadside zoo enclosures that are too small and not properly secured. This is a concern for both animal welfare and for community safety. The proposed legislation would help rectify this concern; if passed, it would modernize and strengthen the act, setting the standard for animal protection laws in Canada. It would support the people who protect and care for animals and deal appropriately with those who abuse them.

I will mention this later on, but in the gallery today we have many of the partners that we worked with in drafting this legislation. I want to say, publicly, thank you to them, to the members of the opposition and to the general public who have spent considerable time debating this bill and working on this bill. Thank you so much. It will help ensure that all animals, whether they are kept as pets or in a zoo or elsewhere, are treated with the care and respect that all living creatures deserve.

There is wide agreement on the need for this stronger stand. Our government developed this legislation in consultation with several concerned groups, including the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the World Society for the Protection of Animals, the Canadian Association of Zoos and Aquariums, the College of Veterinarians of Ontario, the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association and others. Our government is fortunate to have their considerable knowledge and expertise to guide us as we take action to crack down on animal abuse.

Members from all parties in this House have also spoken to the need to improve Ontario's animal welfare laws. Again, I particularly note the efforts of the member from Willowdale, David Zimmer, and the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, Mike Colle, for their incredible

advocacy; the member from York-Simcoe, Julia Munro; and the Leeds-Grenville member, Bob Runciman, for their commitment to animals. All of these above people have been very, very forceful advocates and we appreciate their input.

Let me remind the House of the legislation's key components. If passed, this act would allow the courts to bring tougher penalties against people who are cruel to animals. And at the end of the day, isn't this what the legislation is all about? Isn't that the way it should be? Isn't that a way the society that is caring operates? This protection would include jail time of up to two years, fines of up to \$60,000 and a lifetime ban on ownership—severe, yes; necessary, yes. It would require veterinarians to report suspected abuse and neglect and protect them from personal liability for doing so. It would allow the OSPCA to inspect places where animals are kept for entertainment, exhibition, board, sale or hire, including roadside zoos, circuses and pet stores. The aim would be to ensure that the animals are receiving basic standards of care. The act would also make it a provincial offence to cause distress to an animal, train an animal to fight another animal, or harm law enforcement animals such as police dogs or horses.

As you are aware, Bill 50 was put before the Standing Committee on Justice Policy over the course of last summer. I would like to thank the committee members for their hard work and thoughtful consideration of the bill. The committee conducted public hearings in Toronto, London and Ottawa, and reviewed dozens of written submissions from stakeholders and individuals from across the province. I want to thank everyone who offered their thoughts. It is important to get the input from Ontarians. It is important to ensure that we have encapsulated in this bill that which is important to the people of Ontario. The prevailing opinion was that the proposed legislation is both practical and timely.

As one example, Shelagh MacDonald from the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies said that Bill 50 “makes many necessary changes to bring Ontario's animal protection law into the 21st century and in line with most other provinces.... There's nothing radical in this bill and nothing that will threaten any lawful uses of animals carried out according to normal practices”—very, very important insights that we should remember as we debate third reading of this bill.

As legislators, we invest a lot of time in the nuts and bolts of legislation. That's our job. For a few moments, though, I would like to tell this House and the people who are watching about some recent examples of animal abuse and how this bill would result in more positive outcomes for our animal friends and those who care for them.

Let me talk about Tyson the kangaroo for a second. An Australian tourist raised legitimate concerns that a kangaroo was being kept in a very small cage at a London-area zoo. Under current laws, the OSPCA could not act on these concerns since the information was not current enough to get a search warrant and they could not

observe the animal in immediate distress. Under our new law, the OSPCA could inspect any zoo or enter without a warrant, based upon reasonable grounds to believe that the animal was in immediate distress.

Let me give you the example of AK the puppy. AK is a mixed-breed puppy from Windsor who had his ears crudely cropped. Think about that—your animal having his ears very, very crudely cropped. Under current laws, the OSPCA could only prosecute under the Criminal Code. As a result, they had to determine who had cropped the puppy's ears and whether the harm done was wilful, as required under the Criminal Code. Under our new law, the OSPCA will only need to determine the owner of the animal and that the mutilation occurred, period. The OSPCA could charge the owner with the offence of causing and permitting distress to an animal. The provincial penalties include the possibility of a lifetime ownership ban.

1600

I want to spend a few moments telling you the story of an escaped jaguar. The Bracebridge police were forced to shoot a jaguar dead when it escaped from its cage at an area zoo, but not before the jaguar killed the zoo owner's dog. The Ministry of Natural Resources had revoked the zoo's licence and removed native species from the zoo, but under the current law it had no jurisdiction over the jaguar. In addition, the OSPCA had no information that the animal was in distress or that it posed a danger to others and, ultimately, to itself by being kept in a cage from which it could escape.

We must ensure that no zoo in the province of Ontario can be a rogue zoo, and Bill 50 does this. Under the new law, the OSPCA could inspect and determine whether prescribed standards of care were met, including, potentially, whether the jaguar's cage was sufficient, and then take appropriate action.

I think we all read the story of selling rabid puppies at a Toronto flea market. Remember when puppies infected with rabies were freely sold at a flea market in Toronto? Under current laws, the OSPCA had no information that these puppies were in distress and had no other ability to inspect their condition. Under our new law, the OSPCA would have the ability to inspect any premises where animals are sold and could have detected the animals' health issues earlier on. This would have helped them to find the source of the rabid puppies sooner and this public health incident could have been averted.

Let's talk about dogs left in cars. It seems that the arrival of the first summer heat wave coincides with another tragic report of a dog being left in a car. Each summer, the OSPCA deals with numerous public complaints about dogs being left in vehicles, often suffering from heat and dehydration. Under current laws, the OSPCA can respond, but must be able to observe the animal in immediate distress before taking action. If the animal is not visible—say it was locked in the trunk or it was trying to seek comfort under a seat, behind heavily tinted glass or in the cab of a pickup truck—they would have to obtain a search warrant. A lot of valuable time

would have elapsed and some great harm could have been done to that animal.

Under the new law, if passed, the OSPCA could take immediate action with reasonable grounds to believe the animal was in immediate distress. For example, where an OSPCA investigator could hear the animal in distress or the person making the complaint had seen the animal in distress prior to the arrival of the inspector, the OSPCA could take immediate action.

These examples highlight the serious flaws in the existing laws and how Bill 50 will make Ontario's animal protection laws the strongest in Canada. It is a law for Tyson; it is a law for AK; it is a law for all animals large and small and those who care for them.

The committee process did inspire amendments to the bill that I believe make a strong proposal even stronger. Let me relay them to the House.

Originally, the act proposed that only the OSPCA or its affiliates would be able to use the name "humane society" or "SPCA." This was suggested as a way of helping the police and public more easily identify the local groups that had OSPCA Act authority. We've now added a grandfathering clause to that proposition. This would ensure that affiliates that existed in Ontario when the legislation was first introduced in April 2008 could continue to use their name even if they were disaffiliated with the OSPCA in the future.

This change would also ensure that the hundreds of animal shelters and rescue groups that operate across the province could continue to do their own good work without needing to be affiliated with the OSPCA.

At the suggestion of our committee members in opposition, we've added two new points to the legislation. Bill 50 now proposes that it be a provincial offence to knowingly make a false complaint to the OSPCA with respect to an animal being in distress. Further, if a person was convicted of an animal cruelty offence, the court could order that person to undergo counselling or training. We have also clarified the process through which the OSPCA could retain a seized animal for its own protection.

As an additional point, I would like to reiterate that Bill 50, if passed, would not affect the activities of any law-abiding hunter, farmer, angler or trapper. These activities have long been governed by other legislation and processes, and practices that are currently legal would remain legal under our proposed bill. In fact, we have ensured that the clauses that cite the exception of the agricultural, fishing and hunting sectors are in the main body of the bill.

If passed, Bill 50 would not expand the mandate of the OSPCA. It would, however, give this fine organization more effective tools to conduct its important work and help ensure the well-being of the animals of this province.

It's a long-overdue step that builds on other steps our government has already taken. These include investing \$5 million to improve and modernize OSPCA infrastructure across the province, more than quadrupling

funds for the OSPCA to \$500,000 each year to ensure that all inspectors and agents have access to top-quality training, and providing \$100,000 to support the cost of OSPCA zoo inspection training and the first round of zoo inspections.

There is a statistic that I have long found troubling. The OSPCA investigates about 17,000 allegations of animal cruelty each year. That's at least 17,000 calls made every year by concerned Ontarians who are reporting suspected cases of abuse. I find that appalling, and I find the need for updated legislation to be essential. It's vital that these calls are made, and I commend all those individuals who are aware and concerned and are raising the red flags. I commend the OSPCA investigators, staff and volunteers who answer these calls and are so committed to the care of these animals.

But this statistic also rams home an unmistakable fact: that there are thousands of innocent animals out there that are suffering or in pain or living in deplorable conditions. They cannot speak for themselves; they rely on us. We have the opportunity through this proposed legislation to put tougher laws in place so that animals can be quickly and efficiently rescued from an often horrifying situation, so that the people who treat them with such cruelty are penalized and so that any animal that has been abused, whether it be a cat, a horse, a dog or a kangaroo in a roadside zoo, is given the second chance it deserves for a safe, healthy, good life.

I urge all members to join me in support of Bill 50.

1610

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'm pre-empting the remarks, questions and comments from my colleague, Mr. Miller from Parry Sound-Muskoka, but I just want to say a thank you to the minister. I thought his remarks were bang on. I know there were some controversial parts of this bill. I've come to understand the warrantless entry parts, and I thought your examples, Minister, were quite good in terms of the dog you can't see. The only disturbing thought I had was, I was appearing before the Grey county council a few weeks ago, and they had had a meeting with—I don't know if it was you, Minister, or your staff, but they were under the impression that warrantless entry was already there, and I had to explain to them that, yes, but that the officer or someone had to see the animal under distress. So that was a bit inaccurate and made me look like I didn't know what was in the bill, and I said, "I do know what's in the bill. I've been around here for a few years." But congratulations on updating. It has been almost 90 years and it certainly needed to be updated.

The largest number—almost the second largest—of calls I've ever had as an MPP over the 18 years was when the German shepherd was dragged behind the pick-up truck, and when you consider children are murdered and bad things happen every day, people don't call about that, but they sure call when an animal is in distress. They want the laws changed and they want tougher laws

than what was in the Criminal Code, and these are tougher laws. You can go to jail now for two years; there are higher fines and more authority given to the OSPCA officers.

I want to vote for this—the second-largest number of e-mails and calls that we got was probably more recently, in more recent months, when the dog's ears were clipped and it was left to basically rot in the heat out on the balcony. Thank God somebody went and rescued that dog and noticed it was in distress. And all to make the dog look meaner, which is just sick—sick people.

I've always said that people who mistreat their animals should be treated harshly and it should be taken as a serious crime. I want to thank Lori Grey of Alliston from the Dog Legislation Council of Canada for all of her advice on this and other legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to say quickly that I'm going to support this legislation. There were a number of issues with this bill at the beginning that, by and large, have been addressed, but there are still a few things that I think we need to put on the record, and I'm sure our critic, Cheri DiNovo, when she's back, will do so. But I want to say to the minister that at least it's a step in the right direction.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on Bill 50. First of all, let me congratulate Minister Bartolucci for his leadership in this particular legislation and making sure that we do create one of the toughest laws, in terms of the protection of our animals, in the province of Ontario. So congratulations to the minister and his staff for doing excellent work in putting forward this legislation.

I received a lot of correspondence in my community office in the riding of Ottawa Centre on Bill 50. The majority of the people who wrote to me were in support of this legislation. One of the concerns, however, that they did raise is the so-called section 6, which talked about the affiliation of humane societies with the OSPCA. I'm really happy to see that during the committee process, that issue was looked at and the legislation, as it sits at third reading, has been amended, by which all humane societies which were affiliated with the OSPCA on the date when this legislation was introduced are now grandfathered. That includes the Toronto Humane Society, or other humane societies in London, Ottawa and Kitchener-Waterloo.

That concern has been met, which further strengthens this legislation, so I'm really happy to see that the concerns of my constituents were taken into account when this legislation was being reviewed by the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, and that those changes have been made because we, as the minister aptly pointed out, have to ensure that we create laws to ensure that animals

are fully protected, that cruelty to animals cannot be tolerated.

I'm very proud to support this legislation to ensure that Ontario is on the forefront in protecting animals within our society and within our communities, because that's a responsibility for us.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question and comment.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to add some comments to the speech from the minister on Bill 50, An Act to amend the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. As has been mentioned, it was 1919 when this act was last updated, so it's certainly high time that some changes were made.

This is now third reading. We had five days of public hearings. I know the member from Simcoe North has worked hard on that, and he's going to do our leadoff for third reading shortly. I know that he proposed some 28 amendments. Unfortunately, only three of them were accepted, but sometimes, for the opposition, that's not too bad.

The minister mentioned an incident that happened within my riding, in Bracebridge, where the OPP were called in to what I would call a roadside zoo and shot a jaguar after it had already killed the dog of the owner of this zoo. So I think that we do need to make some changes to bring in standards of care, particularly for some of these roadside zoos, but for all animals.

I still have some concerns to do with warrantless entry and also to do with the training of the OSPCA officers. They should be properly trained in terms of the inspections that they will be doing. They're going to have powers equivalent to a police officer, so they should at the very least have similar training for the work that they will be doing.

I know that PC members Bob Runciman from Leeds-Grenville and Julia Munro from York-Simcoe both brought private members' bills forward in the past to do with this same area, and I think this bill has built on those private members' bills.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'll return now to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, who has two minutes to reply.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to thank the members from Simcoe-Grey, Timmins-James Bay, Ottawa Centre and Parry Sound-Muskoka for their kind comments.

I too want to reinforce that the member from Willowdale, David Zimmer; the member for Eglinton-Lawrence, Mike Colle; the member for York-Simcoe, Julia Munro; and the member for Leeds-Grenville, Bob Runciman, have been very forceful advocates, and I thank them.

As well, I thank the partners in the protection of animal welfare, who are here today. I want to thank them for their wisdom, their guidance and their incredible advocacy. As you see, there looks to be some type of consensus with regard to legislation. I believe that's in place because everyone on both sides of the House, the public at large, and the advocates and partners in animal

welfare worked in a very, very unique partnership to try to get over some of the hurdles that people found originally in this legislation. I guess that's the strength of democracy and that's the strength of the process we use to pass bills.

At the same time, there may be people, at the end of this process, who aren't completely satisfied. Again, given, that is the democratic process. But one thing for sure that we can say categorically is that the protection of animals will be strengthened. We will have moved from worst to first—

Mr. Mike Colle: Ontario's a safer place.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: —and it couldn't and wouldn't have been possible had it not been for the combined efforts of everyone. As my fellow member from Eglinton—Lawrence says, this wouldn't have been possible without the help of everyone, and Ontario is a safer place for our animals because of your efforts. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm very, very pleased to respond today to the third reading of Bill 50, An Act to amend the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. The short title is the Provincial Animal Welfare Act, 2008. There have been amendments over the years, but it's been the most significant change since 1919.

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I was pleased with the fact that we travelled this bill fairly significantly, with two days of hearings here in Toronto, a day in London, a day in Ottawa—and we had one other day. I can't remember where it was now; there have been so many things happening in the course of the summer.

There has been a lot of head-butting on animal welfare in organizations. There is no question we've got issues on this bill that we still have to deal with, and I'm going to point some of those out. A lot of it involves regulation and leadership from this House as we move forward in the future. I think the minister summed it up properly when he said that no matter what happens, if you strengthen legislation to protect animals that are in distress, in the end you've made a good move towards making society better for animals.

Mr. Wilson, the member for Simcoe—Grey, mentioned in his comments the types of responses he's had from the general public, with the e-mails and letters. I recall that, in my time here at Queen's Park, the most correspondence I had ever received was on the pit bull legislation—by far. I think I ended up with correspondence a foot high, letters and e-mails, very, very concerned about the legislation. A lot of those same people have responded over the course of the last few months, but not as many. Many, many people have concerns.

I really do think that when we deal with the ministry staff, when we deal with the parliamentary assistant, Mr. Levac, who led the bill through the committee hearings, and the office of the Ministry of Community Safety and

Correctional Services, and all the people who came out, we're better off today than we were when the bill was introduced, but there's no question that we still have things to do.

In my riding of Simcoe North, I have two OSPCA branches. Both are fairly new. One is a brand new place, because it was destroyed by fire a year ago, and it just opened up in July, about the time these hearings were going on. The second one is in Orillia.

My office is continually involved with fundraising activities for the OSPCA branches. I know they do a dog walk in May at both branches. They do calendars, gala evenings, silent auctions, all these kinds of things, because they do get a lot of interest from the community.

Most people are really concerned about what happens when animals are in distress, and most people want tougher penalties. We talked about—I'm sorry about not mentioning all their ridings, because I don't really recall them—the private members' bills of Ms. Munro, Mr. Runciman, Mr. Zimmer and Mr. Colle in the past, and they all tried to do better things for animals in distress. That's why we end up with a somewhat better piece of legislation.

I'm going to repeat some of the things I said in my leadoff on second reading and read some notes and comments, because I think they should be put on the record.

I want to talk, first of all, about roadside zoos, because that's where this came from. I was so pleased to see that Ms. Tkachyk is here today from WSPA. They were a lead organization in this. We all thought from day one that we would be regulating roadside zoos. And let's face it: That's something that I think needed to be done; it needed to be complete.

First of all, there were no regulations around licensing, and again, I'm going to bring out some points here that there is more to be done on that as well—but things like the amount of water, the shelter, the heat, making sure that they were properly regulated, have to go into the hands of OSPCA, and I'm glad to see that is actually happening.

But not everybody lives near a big zoo. There is still a need for roadside zoos, and I hope people don't want them demolished and taken away.

I'll give you an example. Last Wednesday night, I had to go to an event in Elmvale, and I had my three little granddaughters with me. They can all read now, and they saw the sign for the Elmvale zoo, which is an old, established zoo in Mr. Wilson's riding, Simcoe—Grey, right outside of Elmvale. So I went to this event and I took them out to dinner after, and then after that they said, "Can we go see where that zoo is?" We drove out to the zoo, and it was getting to be almost dusk at that time, but you could still see the giraffes and the buffalo. There are quite a few animals outside in these big fields. The littlest one, Madison, said, "I've been here. My kindergarten class came here last year," and she started naming all the animals off and what they were doing. From that perspective, there are three little girls who wouldn't normally go off to the Toronto Zoo or maybe even

MarineLand, but a lot of people, a lot of families, a lot of school classes have gone to these smaller roadside zoos. If they're going to be in existence, we want them to be well run, well organized, and the animals cared for in a proper manner, because they do have a purpose. I can tell you, the roadside zoo that I'm closest to is the one in Elmvale, and it doesn't matter when you go by there—it's on Highway 27; you can always find large crowds of people at it. I'm in favour, if we're going to have roadside zoos, of making sure they are well run, because they can be an asset to your community as well.

On the roadside zoos, there are things I wanted to make sure that we put on the record, because there are some writing campaigns going on that will make a difference when we get to the final drafting of the regulations, and hopefully when these things are put on the record here in Hansard at third reading, people will in fact listen to them. But there's one going out to the minister right now. I believe it is an e-mail that's being sent around the province, and it's to Minister Bartolucci, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

"Dear Minister:

"Thank you for recognizing that animal welfare matters to Ontarians by introducing the Provincial Animal Welfare Act.

"I appreciate the government's efforts to improve Ontario's laws for the prevention of cruelty to animals. I remain concerned, however, that this will not sufficiently address the problems at roadside zoos unless licensing and standards for the keeping of captive wildlife are included in the regulations which accompany the new law.

"Wild animals such as kangaroos, tigers and monkeys have very different physical and behavioural needs that are challenging to provide for in captivity. Special regulations and standards for captive wildlife are needed to ensure these animals are kept safely and humanely.

"Ontario is the only province that does not license keeping exotic wildlife and does not require zoos to meet public health and safety regulations. It's far too easy for people to acquire tigers and monkeys and keep them in small, ramshackle cages. Captive wildlife should be protected, and anyone who wishes to keep these animals should be licensed and required by law to comply with professional animal welfare and public safety standards.

"I feel that if the government includes standards for captive wildlife in the regulations under Bill 50, it will truly bring Ontario from 'worst to first' in animal protection."

That's signed by a young lady from Guelph, Ontario.

I believe the minister will see a lot of these e-mails, and I hope that when they are drafting regulations and making this legislation complete, they will listen to these kinds of concerns.

Now, I've also got some comments that I received from the World Society for the Protection of Animals, and I want to read that on the record as well today, along with some other things. I don't want to take the whole

hour, but I know I'm starting to take quite a bit of time. This was just recently put out:

"An open letter to Ontario members of provincial Parliament regarding the need for captive wildlife regulations and standards under Bill 50.

"Dear members of provincial Parliament:

"The World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) is pleased to submit recommendations for animal welfare standards that could be implemented through the regulations accompanying Bill 50, the Provincial Animal Welfare Act. These recommendations were submitted to the provincial animal welfare working group that is being facilitated by the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services. We would like to also share our recommendations with all MPPs."

I'm putting it on the record in the House today in case people haven't seen this letter, because we're trying to make this bill, as we said, from worst to first.

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"In order to address Ontario's roadside zoo problem, it is of paramount importance that along with general standards of care for all animals, the regulations should lay out further requirements that will apply to captive wildlife facilities.

"We are pleased to receive from the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, the Honourable Rick Bartolucci, a letter reiterating the government's commitment to establish standards of care for zoo animals in the regulations accompanying the act. We appreciate this commitment, but we want to make sure these standards are comprehensive enough to address the welfare requirements of wildlife in captivity. Wild animals have very different physical and behavioural needs that are challenging to provide for in captivity. Special standards for their care must be established.

"We also continue to encourage the provincial government to implement a zoo licensing regime to ensure that zoos are proactively encouraged to reach these standards as a condition of receiving their annual licence. Ontario is one of the very few provinces that does not regulate zoos and license the keeping of wildlife. (Ontario currently licenses only the keeping of native wildlife in zoos; however, there are a few conditions attached to the licence. No licence is required to keep exotic wildlife such as tigers, monkeys or kangaroos.) Most other jurisdictions have also established basic welfare and public safety standards that zoos and other facilities must comply with. It's time for Ontario to follow suit, and Bill 50 provides the perfect opportunity to bring about these necessary changes. We believe this will truly move Ontario from a position of worst to first in animal protection."

And that's from the actual World Society for the Protection of Animals. I'm not going to go through all the standards of care that they are suggesting, but certainly, in further debate on this bill, someone else may want to add some of these. I'm looking over at the minister, asking—obviously, licensing is a very important part of the regulations, and it's mentioned quite frequently in the

debate, but also when we get to deciding the final regulations.

One of the reasons—when we talk about regulations—I was so concerned prior to the committee hearing, and prior to even second reading debate, is that we had the opportunity to bring in as many people as possible, experts in this field, for example, people concerned with agriculture, people concerned with hunting and fishing regulations, to make sure that they had full input so that their concerns were addressed and we had done it properly.

I have a little bit more on roadside zoos that I wanted to add in. I did want to mention that when we debated this bill, originally the bill was hailed in the press releases and in the media. We heard all the different stories come out in the media, and it was hailed as a roadside zoo bill. I keep bringing this up to the ministry and the ministry staff. The fact of the matter is, we brag about that. However, in the actual legislation—and this is on record a number of times now—the word “zoo” is not mentioned. The actual word “zoo” is not mentioned in the bill. It will be, apparently, in the regulations. But it’s kind of funny; I felt that people were looking for this roadside zoo bill. I looked at every sentence in the bill and in the appendix etc. and couldn’t find it mentioned.

While I was talking about the OSPCA, I wanted to put a few things on the record. These are things I didn’t hear the minister point out which I thought might be interesting to put on the record concerning the OSPCA. In Ontario, the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals is a provincially funded charity that enforces animal welfare laws, and I think that people have to know that they’ve got two roles. They are getting funding from the province, but as I mentioned earlier, there are a lot of fundraising activities taking place, so they have kind of a dual role here, which has been pointed out a number of times in the legislation when we were doing committee hearings and in debate. There is a bit of a conflict when you’re a charity but you’re also sort of the policing authority. That is an issue, and I think that that will continue on as we move forward. I don’t think we’ve heard the end of that particular role, and there may be a way to correct that in the future. However, it’s something that I just wanted to point out that we heard over and over again in the committee hearings, and there are still e-mails and letters flowing in today as a result of that.

The Criminal Code of Canada and municipal bylaws also have provisions for animal welfare. In 2008, the Liberal government introduced Bill 50 to amend the OSPCA Act. While there is broad-based support for animal welfare, this act was controversial for a number of reasons. What I wanted to point out is—this is what is in the legislative library on the OSPCA. It says, “The Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals ... is tasked with enforcing most important animal welfare laws in the province. Each year, inspectors with the OSPCA respond to approximately 15,000 allegations of cruelty to animals. In addition, the OSPCA cares for and shelters tens of thousands of animals that have been

neglected, abused or abandoned. The province of Ontario provides annual funding to the OSPCA in the amount of \$500,000. In addition to the annual grant, in recent years, the OSPCA has received additional grants to assist it in its investigation of suspected puppy and kitten mills, its inspections of roadside zoos, and a one-time capital grant of \$5 million to upgrade OSPCA facilities and computer systems and improve services in northern communities. However, the OSPCA is responsible for raising most of the funds required to cover the costs of its operations, including its inspections and animal care programs; in 2007, funding by the Ontario government accounted for less than 6% of the revenues of the OSPCA.”

So, again, when I say we have these branches across Ontario and their affiliates, the fundraising is a very, very important part of that, and they still of course have the policing authority as well.

“The Criminal Code prohibits persons from killing or injuring animals without lawful excuse, or causing unnecessary suffering to an animal. Until recently, these provisions had not undergone substantive revision since the introduction of the Criminal Code in 1892. Bill S-203, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (cruelty to animals) significantly increased the penalties for contravening the provisions of the Criminal Code relating to animal welfare. Critics of Bill S-203 have argued, however, that the bill failed to accomplish the significant reforms needed to modernize the animal welfare provisions of the Criminal Code. Animal welfare offences under the Criminal Code are dealt with in the context of crimes against property, rather than crimes against sentient, living beings capable of feeling pain. As a result, critics charge that the Criminal Code provisions, as amended by Bill S-203, do not adequately protect wild or stray animals.” I wanted to bring those legislative library definitions into it because I thought it was something that also would be important to bring about.

As I mentioned earlier, we had a number of organizations that visited the committee hearings and made deputations. Many of them, of course, were opposed to section 6, and we’ve made somewhat of a correction on that. We had organizations like the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the Ontario Farm Animal Council, a number of veterinary organizations, a number of animal welfare organizations. We had a number of individual stories that were told, people who had been charged or had their animals taken away by the OSPCA. Of course, those were very emotional examples. People came forward with those, and in some cases they were very, very difficult for the people to explain, because they felt they had been improperly treated. However, we have to move forward. The example we’re using here, or what we continue to say, is that we need better and better training for our inspectors. I’ve been told that that’s the direction we will be going and that’s the direction the ministry feels is appropriate as well.

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One group that has been very adamant recently is the Ontario Farm Animal Council. They have some issues

they wanted to bring forward, and I wanted to put them on the record as well, because I felt that they had made some good deputations, some good recommendations, in their presentations to the committee. They sort of worked in tandem with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. I'll read the most recent letter I received, because they know that Bill 50 is coming up for third reading, and I wanted to read this letter from the Ontario Farm Animal Council. It reads:

"Dear Minister Bartolucci,

"This letter is a follow-up to our letters of May 9 and May 27, 2008. The Ontario Farm Animal Council appreciates the justice policy committee for making the hearing process on Bill 50 accessible to those across the province.

"The series of July hearings made it possible for OFAC and many others to provide recommendations to your government for improving the OSPCA Act. The OFAC recommendations, which were sent to you directly, have been developed with the best interests of animals, animal owners and enforcement agencies in mind.

"Most presenters, regardless of their affiliations, also recommended many of these same improvements. It was therefore surprising to learn that, despite such consensus, these improvements will not be included for consideration when the bill returns for third and final reading.

"Although several amendments introduced by the committee's PC members would have addressed many of the repeated recommendations made by the committee presenters, all but two were turned down." Those are the amendments that we talked about a little earlier.

"We feel strongly that changes are still required to address the needs of farm animals and the concerns of Ontario's farmers and food producers. It is our belief that recommendations that are the best for animals should be accepted regardless of what party proposes them.

"We would therefore ask that your government introduce further improvements to the bill at third reading, and that these include:

"(1) oversight and accountability of the OSPCA and Animal Care Review Board,

"(2) clarification of the warrantless entry provision

"[3] and, a revision to section 21 that would establish the OSPCA Act as a provincial standard in order to ensure consistency across the province.

"We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the legislation and the necessity for further amendments prior to third reading."

And that's signed by the chair, John Maaskant, on behalf of the Ontario Farm Animal Council. He's the chairman of that board.

Again, we have people who thought that the committee process worked fairly well; however, they still have some recommendations that they wish would be implemented and corrected.

We've also got some issues from the chairman of the Humane Society of Canada—they made some very eloquent deputations at the committee hearings. The most

recent request, as recently as September 29—we've had a bunch of these come in just in the last week or so, but I want to put it on the record too. This is from Michael O'Sullivan, chair and CEO of the Humane Society of Canada. It was a letter addressed to the parliamentary assistant, Mr. Levac:

"The Clerk of the Legislature has finally released a copy of the written document submitted to the committee.

"As parliamentary assistant to the minister, we are writing to you specifically concerning your evidence contained in document #1/03/04 dated July 23/08 which you submitted two days before the hearings ended. The information contained in the document which you referred to throughout the committee hearings contains no source references. We would be grateful if you would provide us with these reference sources including all of the raw data used to arrive at these conclusions.

"With regards to your document as it relates to section 6 we would also like to know more about your evidence that: '... there are only 10 known groups operating in Ontario with the name 'Humane Society' which are not affiliated with the OSPCA...' Please provide us with more specific details and how these organizations were included on list and by whom.

"Further, we would like more information concerning the statement: '... section 6 of Bill 50 would also repeal the current section 10 of the OSPCA Act to enable over 200 animal welfare groups that are not affiliated with the OSPCA to continue operating legally...' Please provide with us a copy of your legal opinion in this regard. Does that mean that the more than 200 animal welfare groups are now operating illegally? If this is in fact the case, please provide further details about why this has been permitted to continue and for what period of time?

"Thank you for your consideration of our request.

"Awaiting your reply, I remain, yours sincerely,

"Michael O'Sullivan

"Chairman and CEO

"The Humane Society of Canada"

Mr. O'Sullivan was in fact someone who provided a lot of information and background in the hearings and made some, I thought, very good presentations to the committee. Now that we have this request from him, I'm hoping that in fact Mr. Levac, through the ministry, will respond and answer all those questions he has asked. It seems that his deputation has really been made incomplete because of the lack of answers for some of the data that was provided by the parliamentary assistant leading up to that.

I did want to say that one organization that really showed tremendous leadership on this bill—I had an opportunity to visit their premises—was the Toronto Humane Society. They had huge concerns around section 6, and those concerns were passed on to other humane societies across the province, Burlington etc., that made deputations as well. I just want to say I was so pleased to be able to work, on this particular bill, with all of these organizations. As a critic, you often feel that you don't

have any say at all, but working with all of the different kinds of stakeholders from all different interests in the bill, I felt very fortunate that I had some trust put in my opinion on how we move forward with that. The Toronto Humane Society still has concerns with the legislation. A lot of it involves training of inspectors etc., but I've been very proud of the fact that we had the interest shown from them.

We also had people who are very passionate about animal welfare, people like Peter Worthington from the Toronto Sun. Recently I read—on second reading debate—an article of Mr. Worthington's that he had done on this particular bill.

So as we move forward—I think everybody in this House wants to support this bill. If it strengthens penalties for those causing distress to animals, we want to make sure we get it right. My concern right now is the regulations. We can pass this and leave this House, and we hope the recommendations that we think will be implemented through regulations will take place. I know that it has been a long time coming. I know people in the minister's office have offered us briefings on things, and maybe we can have briefings on the regulations that will be accepted and we can have more input that. I hope it's not just something that comes up on a computer screen some morning and then this is it forever, that there will be no debate or no comment on it.

I think I've put down a number of issues here today with licensing, with the Ontario Farm Animal Council and some of the concerns of the Toronto Humane Society and the Humane Society of Canada. If you want to get this bill right and really and truly listen to all the stakeholders, I think you will have a lot more happy campers if we get these things correct in regulation and then turn to some of these people who are passionate about animal welfare and those who cause animals distress. I think we can look forward and have a bill that's even better if the regulations provide the background for that. I could read a lot of different articles into the record here, Mr. Speaker. I see you looking at your watch, and I'm assuming you want me to sit down fairly quickly. However—

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: It's too late for that.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I can go for another 30 minutes, you know.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: We weren't heckling you.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: You've been really good today. You've been really good with the heckling. It's because you know what I'm saying makes a lot of sense; that's why. We want to make sure that people, the stakeholders, are informed about these regulations and that there's a lot of comment time. We don't know it in this House; we don't know what's really perfect for animal welfare, but a lot of the people who are watching us in this House today or who will be reading Hansard know that there are things wrong with this bill that could be corrected in regulation. They can make it, as someone has said, from worst to first as far as animal welfare is concerned in the province of Ontario.

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With that, I will sit down. I appreciate very much the opportunity to comment on this bill, Bill 50, this afternoon and I look forward to further debate.

I just want to emphasize once again: Let's get these regulations right, and let's listen to stakeholders who continue to send letters in and make sure that their opinions are accounted for. Thanks very much, everyone.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Once again, a wonderful presentation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further questions and comments? The member for Huron—Bruce.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Did you get the hint?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Yes, I did get the hint.

I did want to take this opportunity to thank the member from Simcoe North. How often have you heard the member from Huron—Bruce say that to you? I want to thank you for the work that you have put into Bill 50.

I want to inform the members and the House today that I do strongly support Bill 50. I know there have been some concerns raised with regard to section 6 and also with regard to OFEC, which is the farm animals. But I do believe this is a very important piece of legislation. It's certainly long overdue, and what we can do to help strengthen the protection of animals, I believe, is something that we should get done.

I just want to relay one little story. I had the opportunity to—yes, it's a very little story. I had the opportunity to go out with the VON nurses the other day and I had the chance to go into five homes. Of those five homes, four homes had animals. They were all animals that had been saved from abuse. The story that everyone wanted to share with me was how important Bill 50 was to them, and they wanted to share the story of part of their family, be it a dog or be it a cat, and how they had saved that animal. These are stories, I think, that are important, so I just wanted to share them with the House.

I thank you for allowing me to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much for speaking. Questions and comments.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to add some more comments to the speech of the member from Simcoe North on Bill 50. Certainly, the member has worked hard on this bill, attending the five days of hearings this summer and putting forward many amendments, some that were approved. Today we heard his concerns with what will happen with the regulations.

I think it's true with just about any bill, but particularly with Bill 50, that all those who are affected by the regulations should have an opportunity to see the regulations and hopefully give their two cents' worth and improve the regulations. I wish the government would do that with any legislation, because we'd have rules that are clearer and that people understand and that work better if we followed that process.

The member raised concerns from the World Society for the Protection of Animals and their suggestions for a

zoo licensing regime, and I understand that that would be something that might happen in regulations. He raised concerns about the training of inspectors, and I would concur that I think it's important that these inspectors be properly trained.

The one thing I do have concerns with are the warrantless entry provisions, and I think it needs to be very clear, as well, how that will actually function.

I'd certainly like to commend the member from Simcoe North for all the good work he's done on this bill. We look forward to working with the government to pass this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Just very briefly, I too want to congratulate and thank the member from Simcoe North for his efforts with regard to Bill 50. He is the critic of the official opposition. He has a role to fulfill. I just want to tell him and the House that this was a very, very effective exercise in democracy.

Also, I want to put his mind at ease. Those partners in animal welfare have been working and will continue to work with the government in a very aggressive way to ensure that the regulations that we implement do indeed mirror the intent of this legislation. Again, I want to thank the member for Simcoe North.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. The member for Simcoe North has two minutes to reply, if he chooses to do so.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to thank the member from Timmins-James Bay, the minister, the member from Huron-Bruce—I think that is the first time you've said something nice about me—and the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka for their kind words.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Historic day.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Yeah. I think that's the first time you've said anything nice about anybody on this side of the House.

Interjections.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Okay. Sorry, I won't go any further.

I just want to say that as this bill's carried forward now and we have other people debate on it, and there'll be more correspondence, emails, faxes, phone calls, you name it, I think we're still going to have concerns that will be raised that we'll have to try to address.

I thank the minister. If you're putting everybody's mind at ease on that, that's a good thing. However, I read a number of things into the record that are out there right now that I hope we can resolve. Again, we're leaders here in the province of Ontario. We need to know that our legislation is leading legislation in our country, and it should go from worst to first. I hope that that's a statement we can use with a lot of things that we do in this particular Legislature. So we'll be watching it carefully. We'll also be raising it in question period. When things come up over the next three years, before we form the next government, we'll be looking forward to trying to make sure that we get Bill 50 correct and animal welfare correct.

Thank you very much, everyone, and enjoy the day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I believe we have unanimous consent to stand down the lead for the New Democratic Party and that we adjourn the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Timmins-James Bay is seeking unanimous consent of the House to stand down the leadoff for the New Democrats and to adjourn the debate. Agreed? Agreed.

Third reading debate adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Tourism.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe we have unanimous consent to, notwithstanding standing order 38(b), deal with the late show at this time, following which the House will adjourn for the day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Tourism is seeking unanimous consent of the House to initiate the late show forthwith and, afterwards, to adjourn for the day. Agreed? Agreed.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

SMALL BUSINESS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Newmarket-Aurora has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Labour yesterday. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or his parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

I'm pleased to recognize the member for Newmarket-Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: I requested this special debate on the challenges faced by small and medium-sized businesses because I'm concerned that the McGuinty government is failing this important sector in our province. I see it as my responsibility to ensure that the Premier and his ministers are fully informed of the challenges business owners are facing daily to keep their businesses operating and to point out how, all too often, this government is frustrating the best efforts of hard-working business owners to keep their doors open and the jobs that they've created in their community.

Yesterday, I asked the Premier a very specific question. I reminded him of his pre-election commitment to small and medium-sized employers that he would improve the inspection and audit processes to which businesses are subject in this province. In fact, the Premier reconfirmed that commitment in the 2008 Ontario budget, which stated, "Ontario's goal is to lead all Canadian jurisdictions in efforts to measure and reduce the regulatory burden."

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I pointed out to the Premier that given the reports from business owners from across the province that regulatory

burdens are increasing, not decreasing, has in fact the Premier forgotten his commitment? But rather than answering the question, the Premier referred it to the Minister of Labour, who proceeded into a rant about how I and my party want to “water down legislation and regulations when it comes to workplace ... safety.” He went on to say that I am “not on the side of workers” and that I don’t “want to protect workers.”

Speaker, the minister missed the point completely, and when I clarified that what I was referring to was the regulatory burden and the heavy-handed enforcement that government agencies are strangling businesses with, the best the minister could do was to pronounce that labour relations have never been better. And the Hansard record of his reply will show that it’s clear the minister fully misunderstood or simply does not understand that he has serious issues on his hands here in the province of Ontario.

That’s why we’re here now, because I want to give the Premier and his minister the same information I’m receiving daily from hard-working business owners. It’s my hope that the Premier will direct his ministers to the necessary steps to refocus the government agencies and their front-line staff to do what the Canadian Federation of Independent Business is calling for, namely, to get all of the enforcement staff in government departments and agencies into a helping rather than hindering mode in this province.

I’m not asking government to compromise the health or safety of employees, and I’m not asking for a watering down of legislation or compliance, and neither are the business owners for whom I’m advocating today. I am asking for civility and respect. I’m asking that enforcement staff be redeployed to help business owners, by working with them, to understand the rules of engagement, to help them come into compliance rather than threaten them, and apply reasonableness and common sense in circumstances, especially in circumstances of first-time, innocent non-compliance with government regulation.

Surely this is not an unreasonable request, but let me put on the record what is happening with increasing frequency. The fact is that business owners in this province are constantly, on a daily basis, being harassed by people who should be “civil” servants, who should in fact be working with businesses in this province to help them better understand, and if they are not in compliance, to work with them to come into compliance—not to threaten, not to issue fine after fine and to conduct themselves in such a way that is, quite frankly, offensive to hard-working people in this province.

There are numerous examples of this behaviour. Judith Andrew of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business confirms that her organization has a banker’s box that is full of signed faxes that make that same point.

I trust that the government will receive this appeal in the spirit in which it is brought forward: simply to make the government aware that there are serious problems on the front lines of government service, and that steps must be taken to ensure that civility and respect are the prin-

ciples that guide our front-line civil servants in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. I recognize the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour in response.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: As Minister Fonseca mentioned yesterday, the McGuinty government has worked with our partners, including employers, labour unions, employees, the WSIB and the safe work associations to lower the number of workplace injuries by 20%. I would also like to comment on what my ministry is doing to assist businesses in making sure that they are compliant with the laws of Ontario that are in place to promote healthy, safe and fair workplaces.

Over the past few years, my ministry has played a lead role in a key initiative—modernizing regulatory compliance in Ontario. Currently, 13 different regulatory ministries administer more than 120 statutes in this province. These statutes cover a wide range of responsibilities, including worker health and safety, environmental protection, commercial vehicle safety, food safety, consumer protection, natural resources protection, children’s daycare and foster care facilities, long-term health care facilities, landlord and tenant protection, and tax evasion. Across these ministries, there are more than 2,500 front-line staff undertaking activities related to enforcement of these statutes.

My ministry’s inspections, investigations, and enforcement secretariat led the development of the Regulatory Modernization Act, known as the RMA. The RMA came into effect earlier this year, in January. The RMA enables regulatory ministries and other regulators to work together in a more effective way to protect the public interest and reduce duplication in compliance-related activities.

For example, we can now tackle the duplication, collection and use of compliance information among ministries. Businesses can benefit from this because less duplication reduces their administrative burden in complying with provincial statutes. We expect to take full advantage of the RMA to look at other areas where we could further reduce the burden resulting from compliance-related activities. We will also undertake new initiatives to help businesses comply, and to target our government enforcement resources on serious repeat violators. Our approach is good for business, good for government, and most importantly, it’s good for the people of Ontario.

The investigations and enforcement secretariat has been involved in a pilot project promoting compliance awareness for small businesses seeking Ontario regulatory information. This project involved setting up two web-based compliance information centres, also known as CICs: one for the manufacturers in the plastic products sector, the other for the autobody repair sector. These websites contain one-window access to regulatory compliance requirements for these two sectors.

I’d like to mention I was the PA to the Minister of Government Services. I know the staff at that ministry worked very, very hard, and I can personally attest to the

fact that this was very much appreciated in both of these sectors: the plastics sector and the autobody sector. Previously, small businesses had to visit up to 13 regulatory ministries' websites to access the information they needed. These sites were developed by the investigations and enforcement secretariat in partnership with representatives of the two industrial sectors and the regulatory ministries. The feedback received from these sectors that we have worked with to date is a strong indicator that we are on the right track in addressing the compliance challenges that Ontario businesses face.

The Canadian Plastics Industry Association has been a very enthusiastic supporter of the CIC for plastics. Its president and CEO, Serge Lavoie, recently told us, "Not only have we encouraged our members to make use of the site in order to speed up and simplify the process for achieving full compliance with government regulations,

but we have also actively encouraged other provincial governments to adopt a similar model."

Small business owners in these sectors can now readily access relevant regulatory information in a way that is easy to understand. To date, these outcomes include sector-specific, cross-government compliance information delivered in a consistent format on a web-based platform, reducing duplication in information posting; and effective use of information management tools and approaches while improving service delivery to other small business sectors. We have listened, and we have responded.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1709.

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Wednesday 8 October 2008

Mercredi 8 octobre 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 8 October 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 8 octobre 2008

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the non-denominational prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES SERVICES À L'ENFANCE ET À LA FAMILLE

Ms. Matthews moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 103, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act and to make amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 103, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille et apportant des modifications à d'autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm pleased to rise to speak in support of Bill 103, the Child and Family Services Statute Law Amendment Act, 2008, which I introduced on September 29. This bill brings together two existing pieces of legislation that deal with Ontario's youth correctional system: the Child and Family Services Act, which governs youths between the ages of 12 and 15 at the time of the offence, and the Ministry of Correctional Services Act, which covers young people aged 16 and 17 when an offence is committed.

The amendment that our government introduced last week will harmonize the two pieces of legislation to create a single legislative framework for all youth in conflict with the law between the ages of 12 and 17 at the time of the offence. This new framework will complete our efforts to create a new youth correctional system devoted exclusively to the needs of youth in conflict with the law, a justice system that offers secure and open custody, as well as a wide range of community-based alternatives to custodial sentences, as outlined in the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

The integration of youth justice has been a long time coming. In fact, it was started under the previous government, who knew that the integration of youth justice was needed. Although this legislation is primarily focused on

secure detention and custody, youth in conflict with the law require supports to help them succeed in life. We have in place a range of interventions to respond appropriately to their charges. For the most serious offenders, we have secure custody facilities. We also have open custody and alternatives to custody programs in many communities.

Since the introduction of the Youth Criminal Justice Act, we have experienced a steady decline in the use of open custody facilities. Last year, fewer than half of our open custody beds were used. As a result, we have reduced these unused beds and we're reinvesting the tax dollars saved and putting them back into improving outcomes for youth.

These proposed amendments are part of the government's commitment to build stronger, safer communities by holding youth in conflict with the law accountable for their actions, while at the same time providing the support they need to help them make better choices and lessen the likelihood that they will reoffend, because every time we prevent a reoffence, we prevent a crime, and every time we turn a young person from a path that leads to a life of crime to a path that leads to productive employment, we've strengthened our economy and our society.

Some may argue that these amendments, if passed, will make young people, particularly older youth, less accountable for their actions while committing offences. But placing older youth with younger youth under one act means that we are holding these kids accountable for their actions under one piece of transparent and consistent legislation.

Our proposed legislation provides decision-makers with greater discretion in determining the level of detention for youth in custody who are facing new charges. This is consistent with the federal proposal to broaden the possibility of detention for a young person who represents a danger to the public. It also provides additional mechanisms to ensure that youth who are in secure custody cannot harm themselves or others. To do this, we will give service providers additional powers to deal with contraband items and to protect all staff and clients at youth justice facilities.

This government takes the issue of crime very seriously. When serious crimes are committed and the safety of a community is at risk, we will not hesitate to act to protect the lives and property of the people of Ontario. After studying this issue of youth crime and seeking the advice of experts in this field, we know that youth in custody between the ages of 12 and 17 have very different

needs from adults in custody. If passed, this proposed legislation will complete our efforts to create a dedicated, fully integrated justice system that is responsive to the needs of both younger and older youth who are in conflict with the law.

This legislation, if passed, will ensure that youth aged 12 to 17 at the time of the offence will no longer be held in the same secure correctional institutions as adults. This is important, because it means that youth in custody will not come into contact with adults convicted of serious crimes. It will ensure that these young people between the ages of 12 and 17 have access and supports based on their specific needs. It will also ensure that they receive the programs and services they need in a setting that's appropriate for their age group. This, the evidence tells us, is one of the keys to stopping young people from becoming repeat offenders and beginning the journey toward making the right choices.

For this reason, our government has committed to removing all young people in custody between the ages of 12 and 17 from adult correctional institutions by April 1, 2009. I want to tell all members of this House that we are on schedule to meet that goal. To achieve it, we're building or expanding new and existing youth justice centres in a number of communities across the province. This is on top of the 20 secure youth-only facilities located throughout the province. These new centres will offer state-of-the-art facilities that will include on-site education and rehabilitation programs.

These programs are crucial, because they offer opportunities for young people to learn new skills, develop their minds and bodies, and become productive members of our society. The first of these youth justice centres opened in Sault Ste. Marie in July. Named after a local police officer who was killed in the line of duty, the Donald Doucet Youth Centre offers education, training and the promise of a new start for 16 youth in custody. More than 130 construction jobs were created at this centre during the building phase, and 30 new provincial government jobs have been created for staff and support workers at the centre.

Additional youth justice centres are being built in Brampton, Thunder Bay and Fort Frances. All of them are scheduled to open in early 2009. As well, the existing youth justice facility in Ottawa is being expanded and will also open in the first few months of next year.

These buildings are about much more than bricks and mortar, the number of jobs created and the number of young people in custody. They are, quite simply, about hope—hope for a brighter future for young people who have made mistakes and who are paying the price for their misdeeds. But through training, counselling and guidance, these centres offer youth in conflict with the law the chance to take the first step toward a brighter future for themselves and their families.

0910

By locating these centres in communities across the province, including northern Ontario, we can keep these young people closer to their homes and their families.

Having family members close gives young people valuable support while they are in custody and provides them with a smoother transition back into the community when they have completed their sentence. That is an important consideration when it comes to helping prevent youth from the possibility of slipping back into the patterns that originally brought them into conflict with the law.

As well, our government has made special provisions to help meet the needs of aboriginal youth. The new Fort Frances facility is being designed specifically to meet the needs of these young people and will be operated by an aboriginal service provider, the Fort Frances Area Tribal Chiefs. This facility will be the first of its kind in Canada dedicated to aboriginal young people in conflict with the law. It will provide each of the 12 young aboriginal men and women housed there with their own case manager, who will be responsible for getting them the support and treatment they need.

In addition to training and counselling services, the aboriginal youth will be given opportunities to learn more about their culture and to practise spiritual beliefs that will help them connect with that culture. Our government strongly believes that by providing aboriginal youth with the tools they need to make the right choices, they can be set upon the right path to achieve their goals in life.

All of Ontario's youth deserve the opportunity to achieve their ambitions and take advantage of everything our province and our country have to offer them. That has been our government's objective since we have assumed office. That's why we've implemented the new Ontario child benefit for low-income families and offered increased support for families that have children with special needs. We've also introduced the youth opportunities strategy, to help provide young people in underserved communities with training and skills to compete in today's challenging international job market. When youth find themselves in conflict with the law, we have in place an alternatives-to-custody program, which provides support, counselling and training to help them reorient their lives and get back on track.

Some young people will make the wrong choices, and when they do, we will do everything in our power to ensure that they face the consequences of their actions. For those who pose a threat to society, we take action to keep our communities safe. But for those who show potential, we offer support and guidance to help them make a fresh start and begin becoming productive members of our society—that is our commitment.

These proposed amendments to the CFSA, if passed, represent the final steps in achieving our objectives. For these reasons, and for the reasons that will be outlined by my colleagues, I urge all members of the House to join me in supporting these proposed amendments.

The Chair (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The member talks about this wonderful bill she is bringing in. But this wonderful bill is not going to put one more police officer on the street,

in a summer and a fall when every week, if not every day, we open the newspaper and find that somebody else has been shot in Toronto. These shootings don't take place in isolated areas. They don't take place in areas we have come to traditionally think of as crime-ridden areas—I won't mention names, but we are aware of what those areas are. These shootings are taking place all over the city now. This bill is not going to put one more police officer on the street; it's not going to prevent one crime in Toronto.

At a time when we have huge economic challenges in this country, this government will be spending a tremendous amount of money. When crime rates traditionally rise, when we have economic difficulties—they've finally admitted that they actually have an economic problem in this province, and we're having a special debate on it now, all of a sudden. We called for this debate in early June this year, and they've finally admitted that there is a difficulty, there is a problem in Ontario with the economy, with their budget and with their precious five-point plan, which hasn't worked, isn't going to work and is far too little too late.

It's disappointing to see this government wandering down this road. Certainly, trying to protect youth from youth crime is an important start to prevent crime in adults, because of course adult crime comes out of youth crime. But to move in this direction at this particular time with a large expenditure of money and not one more police officer—I just think this government is moving in the wrong direction.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I listened very carefully to the whole 15-minute leadoff speech of the minister regarding this new bill, Bill 103. One of the things that the minister spoke about was the fact that she believes that this bill is actually going to provide hope and opportunity for young people who have found themselves on the wrong side of the law. I have to tell you, when I read this bill—it does nothing of the sort. There's nothing at all in this bill that says it's going to help young people to make better choices in their lives. There's nothing in this bill that talks about how we're going to change a system that puts young people on the wrong side of the law in the first place.

The minister knows very well, if she has actually read any of the reports and done any of the hard work in terms of looking at what leads to crime in young people, that young people who don't have an opportunity for a future often end up on the wrong side of the law. We know that young people who don't have jobs often find other ways to get money. We know that young people who have addiction problems are more likely than not to be the ones who get into trouble with the police. We don't have very much service in this province when it comes to addictions, so of course, without services to help with these addictions that young people are facing, guess what? They end up in trouble with the law. We have a mental health system in the province of Ontario that

doesn't serve the needs of young children, and as they age with mental health problems not being taken care of, guess what happens? They get in trouble with the law. We have young people in this province who are living in desperate, desperate poverty, whose parents are unable to hold down a job because the jobs don't exist, who live in substandard and inadequate housing, who go to school hungry, who can't get a decent education. Those are the kids who—guess what?—end up on the wrong side of the law. So I'm very sorry to say that Bill 103 does nothing of what this minister claims in her initial remarks.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I'm very pleased to be able to take a couple of minutes and comment both on the minister's speech and Bill 103. I'm pleased to stand in support of this legislation being brought forward. Not every piece of legislation can fix all of the ills. Pieces of legislation are intended to build on what's currently in place. They're intended to refine, in some cases, existing standards, existing situations. I think Bill 103 does exactly those kinds of things.

I think the opportunities to create new, secure facilities for those young people who need them allow those young people who currently might be in a youth unit within an adult facility to be in an environment that's focused on youth needs, which is an important part of the rehabilitative capacity that's needed in the province for young people who have found themselves to have gone astray.

I think that bringing together legislation so that young people who are of similar ages, less than adult age, is being managed in a legislative capacity under one ministry's legislation, as opposed to multiple ministries', is a good and progressive way in which to build on the needs of addressing and supporting youth who find themselves in these kinds of environments.

I'm pleased to be able to stand and support the bill as presented. As I say, it builds on good work that is currently being done by the children and youth services ministry, it builds on the investments that are being made in the province on behalf of young people, and I think it will add, in an additive way, to a good legislative framework that we need to address the concerns and problems that young people find themselves in.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to have a moment to respond to the Minister of Children and Youth Services with respect to her presentation this morning on Bill 103, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act and to make amendments to other Acts. The minister's comments were brief and she did not take her full time. Her parliamentary assistant didn't participate in the debate. But I know we're at second reading and I know there will be lots of opportunities for other members to offer their comments on this, and I'm certainly looking forward to the comments of our critic in this functional area, the member for York-Simcoe, because she has a lot to add to the debate.

0920

We know that we're entering a very difficult economic period. We know that the government wants to commence debate on the challenges we're facing, and there is a motion that stands in the Premier's name that has been tabled that we're going to be debating very soon, talking about changes to the government's financial plan or fiscal plan. We're possibly taking about reduced spending, we're possibly talking about reallocating spending; perhaps the government is contemplating higher taxes, perhaps the government is contemplating a deficit—we don't know yet; the Minister of Finance has not been fully forthcoming. But I would ask the Minister of Children and Youth Services, how much is this bill going to cost? How much is it going to cost to implement it? Is she certain that this is not going to be part of the Treasurer's fiscal reduction plan when he brings forward his financial statement? Certainly these are questions that need to be asked.

I listened to the minister in her comments and I didn't hear from her any plan to reduce youth crime. I didn't hear from her any targets or time frames for reducing youth crime. I would ask her if she has any of those targets and time frames in mind, in her two-minute response—and further, I would ask whether or not this bill is going to be referred to a standing committee of the Legislature so there would be more opportunities for public discussion and public input on this particular issue.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I thank the members from Halton, Hamilton Centre, Pickering–Scarborough East and Wellington–Halton Hills for their comments, and I look forward to the debate on this issue. I think that all of us in this House are committed to reducing youth crime, committed to reducing crime in general.

Let's be really clear about what this bill is and what this bill isn't. This bill is largely administrative in nature. It brings together two acts so that all young people aged 12 to 17 at the time of the offence are governed under one act. That work is already under way and it is the final piece in what is a transformation of the youth justice system in this province. The member from Wellington–Halton Hills asked, will it reduce crime? The answer is, our program absolutely is committed to reducing crime. That's what this is all about.

The evidence is very clear—and I have taken the time to review it—that with the right support, kids who commit crimes when they are young can move on into a full, productive life in our society. Our youth justice programs are built on the evidence that tells us with the right supports we can reduce the likelihood that they will reoffend. That prevents crime. Every time you prevent a crime, because a youth has been given a chance to get on with his or her life, you are making a safer society. That is what we are all committed to doing.

We are building on what we have already done. This piece of legislation in and of itself is largely adminis-

trative, but it is an important piece because it pulls it all together. It is the final step in the transformation of our youth justice system.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I would like to remind members that questions and comments are not intended to enter into a new debate on a different subject. Questions and comments are specifically meant to be made to the speaker that had the floor at that time, and we would appreciate it if you kept them that way.

Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to join the discussion on Bill 103. There's very little wrong with this bill because there is, as the minister has even alluded to, very little in the bill. In fact, it could be referred to as a house-keeping bill, meeting the deadlines that had already been established and simply moving provisions around. Older young offenders will no longer be under a particular ministry; they will then move to the Ministry of Children and Youth Services.

The government's press release talks about the government's plans to make communities safer. This bill has no connection to that worthy goal. Communities do need to be made safer, and if you had really wanted to, you could have introduced a bill that would have helped communities.

Youth crime is a very serious problem in Ontario. You see it every day on the news, more and more frequently. Youth are killing innocent people in this province, and so many of the victims of youth crime are, in fact, other young people. We have all read the stories of what the real problems are with youth crime in Ontario. Here are just a couple of tragic stories in the last few weeks.

From the St. Catharines Standard of October 4:

"Two years ago, a young man recounted to a St. Catharines jury how he laid in wait to kill.

"He hid in Bruce Firman's garage in the north end of the city until the 72-year-old retired real estate agent arrived home on his bicycle. When Firman entered, the killer, then 17, held a pipe wrench with two hands like a baseball bat and swung at the man's head.

"The teen beat Firman on the ground until he stopped breathing.

"He received the maximum custodial sentence a youth can get for first-degree murder: six years. Although a judge ruled in February 2003 that the teen should be tried as an adult, an appeal reversed the decision.

"Now, he's out of jail."

Other cases from the same paper:

"A 14-year-old girl was charged with second-degree murder for smothering toddler Matthew Reid in a Welland foster home." As a result of that, she was sentenced to four years in custody and three years in supervised community living.

"In Niagara Falls, a 17-year-old girl helped kick 58-year-old John Everard to death in 2003.

"The girl pleaded guilty to manslaughter in 2004 and received an 18-month sentence, of which one year was in custody and six months in the community."

The Toronto Star, on August 19, reported:

"In 2003, there were 39 known gangs in Peel. As of last year that number had jumped to 108, said Constable Dirk Niles of the intelligence services gang unit.

"The number of gang members and associates has almost doubled in that period, from just over 800 to well over 1,500 in Brampton and Mississauga today, said Niles, adding that the increase is partially due to improved efforts in tracking gang activity in the region."

Sixteen-year-old Alex Masih "became Peel region's 17th homicide victim of the year on August 9 when he was gunned down next to this modest townhouse complex near Kennedy Road and Williams Parkway, in the heart of Brampton.

"A week later Farhan Ali Omar, 22, was stabbed to death in Mississauga, bringing the homicide total to 18, and setting a record for the amount of murders in Peel in a single year. With more than four months to go, the numbers will likely continue to climb in the rapidly expanding suburbs west of Toronto."

But some people are claiming that youth crime has declined in the last few years. Well, here is an explanation. Mark Bonokoski, writing in the *Toronto Sun* in August, said the following:

"Statistics Canada indicated there was some good news in the wealth of bad news concerning youth crime—the bad news, of course, being the fact that serious crime among youth falling under the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA) has risen dramatically.

"The latest tabulations by StatsCan, focusing on 2006 research, showed violent crime among youth aged 12-17 increased 12% in the last decade, and 30% since 1991.

"And homicides had jumped by an astounding 41% since 1997, with 2006 seeing 84 young people—72 boys and 12 girls—implicated in 54 homicides.

"The good news, said StatsCan, was youth involvement in property crime had fallen to a third of what it was a decade ago, putting it at its lowest point since 1996.

"Break-ins were down 47%, minor theft by 33% and car theft by 41%."

0930

Let me explain: The stats are indeed real, but they do not take into account that charges that would have meant convictions 10 years ago would not mean that today.

Bonokoski got an explanation for this from the member from Leeds–Grenville, "who wrote in an e-mail following that column, 'You might want to [check] on the accuracy of these stats.

"Police are not laying charges for many crimes,' he wrote. 'They are using "diversion"—to things like community service (which frequently isn't monitored), or less.

"I was told of one incident in my riding where a 15-year-old stole a car, was caught several hours later, and his punishment?—A warning letter.

"The act needs a complete rebuild."

"One of the more authoritative analysts of crime stats is Scott Newark, a former Alberta crown prosecutor and

now special counsel to the Ontario Office for Victims of Crime.

"He sees 'diversion' as a buck-passer, and the" Youth Criminal Justice Act "as a shackle on the appropriate policing of young offenders—all covered in his brief to Parliament when the Young Offenders Act was devolving into its present form.

"Society has a number of choices when it comes to the increasing rate of youth crime over the past decade," he wrote.

"It can strengthen the penalties in a hope to deter conduct; add enforcements in the hope to catch and thus deter more offenders."

"Or it can simply decide that that which was previously a crime will no longer be treated as a crime."

"Parliament, as it turned out, took the last" option.

"Under section 6 of the" Youth Criminal Justice Act, "for example, a police officer is 'compelled' to consider a number of options before actually arresting a young offender, and this would apply to a car thief, a drug peddler or a sexual offender because no youth crime is exempt from the act's diversion eligibility.

"The cop, under section 6, could ignore the incident and simply drive away. The act calls it 'no action taken.'

"The cop could tell the car thief not to steal a car again, and then drive away. The act calls it 'issuing a warning.'

"The" police officer "could get out of his patrol vehicle, use a printed form telling the young car thief not to do it again, and then drive away.

"The act calls" this 'administering a caution.'

"Or, the officer could take the young car thief to an agency or program that would help him deal with his penchant for thievery, but only if the young offender agrees.

"The act calls this 'referring.'

"Even if the" officer "decides to lay a charge, however, another layer of 'diversion' comes into play.

"Under section 8, the crown can tell the officer to go back to the young offender and tell him to stop stealing, and then the crown will either withdraw the charge or refuse to lay one.

"Under section 10, the crown can tell the" officer "to refer the young thief to an extrajudicial sanction, which could include writing a letter about how it is not appropriate to steal."

We all know the problems. It is time for this government to take action. We need reform in Ottawa to ensure that weak sentencing is eliminated. We need this government to start taking action to prevent youth from turning to crime, to intervene when necessary and to rehabilitate convicted youths in cases where we can.

I find it very interesting that in the minister's statement to the House when she introduced this bill last Monday, there was one word she never used, one word that should be at the heart of any bill about crime and justice issues, one word whose omission shows this government's real priorities when it comes to the needs of Ontario residents. The word the minister failed to mention when she introduced this bill last week was the word

“victim.” Not once did she speak this very important word.

The Minister of Children and Youth Services spoke of creating a “system designed specifically with the needs of youth in mind,” but what about the needs of the victims of young criminals? Why have you failed to speak about their rights? The bill before us today is a mere housekeeping bill. It will not make a single person in Ontario safer. It will not prevent any crime. It will not help youth who are in trouble or who are the victims of other youth.

Three years ago, our party published a report on youth crime. We are still waiting for this government’s report to come out. Our report was titled *Time for Action: A Report on Violence Affecting Youth*. Our party held round-table discussions with stakeholders, parents and youth and came up with 22 recommendations to keep youth away from a life of crime. First, improved policing: We recommended more police officers and to have them sooner. Everyone in this House remembers this government’s repeated announcement of 1,000 new police officers. It became a joke to see the ministers make the same announcement again and again. Obviously, doing it is the important thing. We suggested a crime reduction commissioner, one experienced individual to study intensely the issue and offer permanent solutions. We wanted a locally developed police strategy, community policing designed to meet the individual needs of individual communities, a more effective system of information for police officers in the community. We need a culture of information sharing amongst law enforcement. A good example of this is the practice in Boston, where they tracked information such as who bailed out youths from jail to make linkages to who belonged to which gangs. We recommended a warrant sweep. Police should be encouraged to conduct sweeps of high-risk areas to target those trespassing and those with outstanding arrest warrants. Police should work with communities to develop this plan.

Our second series of recommendations was to fix our justice system. Sentencing has to be made tougher. We should lobby federal parties to toughen sentences for violent crimes. We suggested that the crown should contest bail for anyone committing a crime involving a gun. We want to toughen the Youth Criminal Justice Act for crimes involving violence, particularly guns. Rehabilitation of young offenders is important, but the community must be protected from violent youth. Probation officers and police should get the power to make home visits to first-time offenders. If only they could get to young people early enough to help steer them away from crime. We must halt the flow of illegal guns into Canada. The federal government must tighten our borders to cut off the flow of illegal weapons into our country. To do this requires more searches, better information about gangs and full co-operation from provincial and local governments.

0940

Our consultations to produce the report also identified a number of areas outside law enforcement where we

really could make a difference. Mentoring and tutoring of students should be established in every school in at-risk neighbourhoods; both adults and other young people should be involved in this, starting in Toronto and working its way out to other areas of the province. Mentorship should also be provided by Ontario’s college and university student athletes. These young athletes should use their influence as positive role models to assist coaching a youth team in their particular sport. Scholarships should be offered to help at-risk students finish high school and begin post-secondary education. Internships with the public sector and businesses would provide young people experience and options in life. Summer internships would show youth that another life is possible. We recommended a review of the Safe Schools Act to make it work better.

Another key recommendation is parental education. Many new parents do not have the life skills to give their children a good start in life. Parenting education should be provided in high schools, and Early Years centres should be expanded. People like Dr. Fraser Mustard and others have done world-class, amazing research about how important the first few months and years of life are to a child’s development. Organizations such as Families and Schools Together do great work with children. They provide that kind of stable connection between the community and the family that is at the core of understanding the importance of role models, of recognizing the values of organizations that exist to support families in the province.

As an aside, I have to remind the government that due to their underfunding, the Early Years centre in Stroud in my riding is going to close at the end of November. This seems to fly in the face of all of the research that would demonstrate the importance of providing parents and families with the kind of support that they need. The government is very conscious of, and the minister herself made comments this morning about, the limitations of this bill. Certainly, when the minister talks about providing supports and making sure that people are able to steer away from a life of crime, the investments that the Early Years centre represents are exactly the kind of work that, in theory, she is suggesting should be available.

So it would seem to me that in the context of this debate and in the context of this bill, which is described by the minister as a harmonization of existing legislation and of meeting a deadline of April 2009—that’s the purpose of this bill. But as the Minister of Children and Youth Services, who is now assuming this responsibility for the part of the youth justice system that has been under corrections, it’s the perfect opportunity, then, to demonstrate what kind of support she is prepared to provide to people like the families in my riding who have, frankly, oversubscribed to the Early Years centre, recognizing how valuable those kinds of investments are. There is a wealth of information and research that supports the importance of the investment that can be made at this time.

Our task force also recommended programs that would increase the role of fathers and recognize that there are some responsibilities and skills to be learned to be a good father. Too many young men in at-risk areas abdicate their parental responsibilities. A number of youth our party met with indicated that they did not have a positive father-figure role model. We must also encourage young fathers to play an important role in their children's lives and emphasize how important they are to a young child.

I think back on my own childhood and the opportunities that were afforded me and my sister to have undivided time with our father. One of the things that I always thought was interesting was that as a family—certainly, there wasn't the kind of funds to allow him to go golfing. I was the beneficiary of that because it meant that Sunday afternoons he spent with me and my sister and not on the golf course. So it's not just a question of at-risk or of the socioeconomic, it's also the kind of important value that people place on this. A lot of times I think that's a societal issue, and we, as parliamentarians, need to be the leaders of that kind of societal change, recognizing the value of taking your kid for a walk instead of chasing a ball on the golf course.

In my riding, Catholic Community Services of York Region runs a number of excellent programs. Among these is the Focus on Fathers, which has been very well received and certainly, again, oversubscribed. It also looks at providing people with some insight into not only the importance of their role, but with some techniques.

We also looked at recommending looking at the role of pop culture in contributing to crimes. Certainly, there has been much study done of the violence of video games and the kind of contribution they make to youth violence. I think, again, that there is a parental role here as well. I can remember when our daughter was at an age where suddenly she moved from cartoons to music videos. Just as I had spent some time with her looking at the pre-school programs and the programs for quite young children, I then continued that interest in looking at some of the music videos. One of the things that disturbed me was the way in which women were sometimes portrayed. Once we'd had a conversation about that, she then became far more discriminating in looking at those videos, and instead of just a passive viewer, she now had a sense of, "Wait a minute. What is the message they are giving me here? Do I accept this message or not?" Sometimes a lot of these things aren't really difficult, but they do need to have some understanding.

We in this party have certainly tried, through public meetings, through meeting with a variety of experts and others, to look at where we should begin. When I look at this particular piece of legislation here today, I recognize the legal imperative that has prompted the minister to introduce this piece of legislation. But I would argue that it's also an opportunity to take stock of what the processes are that lie behind the kind of work that this framework legislation is about to embody. I think that it is a missed opportunity if the minister is not talking about and looking at the kind of research that exists and

bringing leading-edge funding for leading-edge work that quite frankly is right here at home.

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I've made references to things like Families and Schools Together, and I've met with people who have told me it has changed their lives. It has given them a sense of belonging in the community. It has given them a sense of people who have similar concerns to the concerns they have. It has provided for their children having a far better sense of relationship to the school. These are relatively inexpensive, but hugely valuable impacts that you can expect. The Focus on Fathers program—again, the dollars attached to it are certainly low in exchange for the return that you're going to get.

So we are saying here that programs for youth in schools and in the community need to be improved. The different levels of government need to work together to actually help young people see that they do not need to turn to a life of violence. This report that I've referenced was made almost three years ago, and sadly, we have not seen youth violence improve; in fact, it has worsened.

Bill 103 deals only with which ministry will hold authority over older youth offenders, and it moves some of the rules and regulations into legislation. Obviously, it's not a sense of a bad bill, but we are in a situation in this province where there is so much more that can be done. We all remember the summer of the gun in Toronto. We do not even use this term anymore, since youth crime and youth violence are now virtually a daily fact of life. Too many youth are joining gangs, too many youth are committing violent crimes and too many young people are dying, and as I mentioned earlier, the minister has never talked about the victims. We have so many people who, for every one of these crimes, is a victim. That has not taken the place that it should in the opportunity that government has to respond to that; even the question of bullying and trying to look at what happens: The legislation is silent on the issue of the victim. Usually children are the objects of this, and they are affected for life. The kinds of support that they and their families need are simply overlooked.

So it's rather unfortunate, then, as we take stock of the kinds of problems that have been created in our communities and the increase of those things, that this government is doing so little.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I certainly did enjoy the comments from the critic for the opposition.

Applause.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: She got a good round of applause from the minister and the Minister of the Environment as well.

There's one piece that I have a little bit of different information about in terms of the statistics, I guess. I was going to raise those in my own remarks, which are coming up very shortly, and that is the issue around the rates of youth crime. The information that I have, in fact, shows that Ontario is the second lowest in the country in

terms of youth crime statistics. In fact, I think Quebec is the lowest and Ontario is the second lowest in terms of the propensity of youth crime. Again, when it comes to talking about these kinds of issues, it's really important that we look at all of the different pieces of information, but also the sources of those pieces of information and how those pieces of information are used to support various kinds of arguments.

I would say that the member brought a lot of important issues to the table. I'm on exactly the same page as her particularly when she talks about services for young children. The lack of child care in this province is abominable, as is the lack of services for families who have very young children, those very ages which are the most important when it comes to early learning and then the outcomes of that early learning later in life. The evidence is clear, as the member mentioned in her remarks, and Fraser Mustard has actually thrown up his hands in disgust in terms of the lack of action not only in Ontario but across this country, specifically in terms of how we make those investments when children are very, very young so that over time you end up reducing your costs significantly in areas like youth justice, educational supports and health.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I also want to thank the member from York-Simcoe for her comments on this bill. Certainly, I would remind the House that this bill is intended to bring together two pieces of legislation so that children and youth who are in conflict with the law are treated with consistency under one bill. That transformation has already been underway.

The member talked about victims, and I think as a government, we are certainly always mindful of victims. That's why, and I want to quote from the minister's speech, the minister clearly stated, "This government takes the issue of crime very seriously. When serious crimes are committed and the safety of a community is at risk, we will not hesitate to act to protect the lives and property of the people of Ontario." This is certainly a recognition of the fact that victims are entitled to justice as well.

We need to make sure that children who are in conflict with the law also have an opportunity to change their ways, have an opportunity to better their lives and have an opportunity that will make sure they don't reoffend. Reoffending is probably the greatest issue that we are trying to deal with here. We talk about mentoring, and I heard the member from York-Simcoe talk about mentoring and other programs. We need to make sure that these young people have an opportunity to turn themselves around and become contributing members of society.

That is why we want to make sure that they're treated with consistency. This bill will make sure that they have those opportunities, but it also gives the decision-makers greater discretion and the ability to determine the length of that detention. Again, they are to provide justice for the victims as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to make just a few comments. I believe our opposition critic made it very clear that the government's press release talked about a plan to make our communities safer. The bill in no way has any connection to the worthy goal of making our communities safer.

In fact, she pointed out very clearly that this is primarily a housekeeping bill. What it does is bring older young offenders under one ministry. When I look at the explanatory notes in the legislation—which, by the way, was just introduced on the 29th—it's very clear, if you just read the explanatory notes, that this is purely a housekeeping, administrative exercise. It does nothing to the laudable goal of making our communities safer. If I was to be specific, I would look at the legislation, and the member from York-Simcoe has pointed this out. It "permits the minister to designate persons to conduct inspections and investigations in places of temporary detention, of secure custody and of open custody." That's the kind of tone and themes that are marked throughout this legislation.

As laudable as administrative goals are, at the end of the day we have a serious problem if you look at street crime and drugs and youth and youth violence. Our position clearly would be something that I'd encourage the minister to look at: repeat violent offenders. There should be consequences for those kinds of actions. If that is not spelled out in here, the courts need you, Minister, to direct that policy direction, and it's not in here.

This is administrivia gone wild under a Liberal government. This is about making it more comfortable for them. I'm waiting for the member from York-Simcoe's wrap-up on this because she has it right: It's well intended, but in fact there are no teeth in the deliverables.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

The member for York-Simcoe has two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I appreciate the comments made by other members, the members for Hamilton Centre, Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and Durham.

If I were to take the comments collectively here this morning—and certainly the message that I feel is important for the government to receive—it's the question of the fact that on the one hand we have a housekeeping bill; we're sitting here in relative comfort discussing a housekeeping bill, whereas out on the streets of all of our communities, in fact, there's a sense of urgency. I think that's where we're having difficulty, in the fact that, okay, fine, you want to put these two things together; in fact, that was a decision that was made some years ago. This is only because you are facing the deadline of April 2009 that we're looking at this housekeeping matter.

Our streets are in dire straits. Our communities are under siege. It's that kind of urgency that I think has prompted all of us to speak about what we should be

talking about. I liken it to the fact that we are going to debate a resolution by the Premier on the economy months after we started saying you need to be concerned about this. So on the one hand we have a housekeeping piece of legislation here; outside are dire circumstances. A sense of urgency needs to unfold on this topic.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm certainly pleased to have a chance, on behalf of New Democrats, to speak to Bill 103. We definitely welcome the opportunity to have a discussion about this bill, which, as the minister said, in fact does unify the youth justice system and bring 16- and 17-year-olds—formally, I guess—into the current system that we have here in Ontario. Really, what's been happening is that they've been left in a little bit of a limbo over the last little while and as a result have not actually had a chance to access programs and services that we would expect them to be able to take advantage of in the facilities that they are currently in—although “currently” is probably a bit of a misnomer, because we know that there's a move of a lot of these young people out of those kinds of facilities into ones that, as the minister indicated in her remarks, are being built specifically to house, if you will, the consolidated system.

I actually believe that it is the right thing to do to bring the system into one consolidated system, a youth-only system. I think that would give opportunities for better rehabilitation so that the kids who have found themselves in the youth justice system will be able to have the most supports that they could possibly have and be able to, hopefully, some day, live very productive lives, and healthy lives at that.

We know that many of the youth who become involved in the youth justice system didn't get there by fluke. Oftentimes those kids are coming from extremely difficult situations. They've become involved in the justice system because of where they come from in their lives. They often are the kids who are growing up in poverty in this province. They're often the kids who have experienced physical and/or sexual abuse. Of course, yesterday the minister gave a statement in the House here on abuse prevention month. These are the kids that we're talking about, who end up not being able to cope because of some of the things that they've experienced, and turn to crime as a result. We know that many young people in the criminal justice system end up there because of mental illness that often goes untreated, undiagnosed and ignored until it worsens and worsens; events occur and young people end up not having had the services and supports they need for their mental illness but in jail instead.

They're youth, really, who are from our communities. They are young people who are part of our neighbourhoods, part of our ridings, part of our province. They're not these other people who are out there somewhere; they are actually kids from our own communities. We no doubt have a responsibility towards those kids to try to get them on the right track and back into a community, with a much better outcome.

Having said that, it's really, really important I think to acknowledge and recognize that the public safety has got to be preserved. It's not one issue or another; we have to look at the issue from a broad perspective and acknowledge and recognize that folks out there are really concerned about the likelihood of being victims of some kind of violent crime, some kind of criminal act. Those folks are out there. They're worried. There's a palpable sense that people are concerned that there is going to be something that threatens them in their daily lives, and this is unacceptable. It's really unacceptable that this fear, this anxiety, this sense of the likelihood of an event happening that's going to be a criminal act upon average people—that's out there, and that's something we really have to take seriously and deal with. People have a right to live in their communities without that kind of fear. They have a right to enjoy their lives and their neighbourhoods without worrying that they're going to be the victims of—you name it—a robbery, a carjacking or some kind of violent crime.

The other thing that is important to recognize is many of those folks who have that fear are regular folks. They're not the folks who are living in gated communities or buildings with high security; they're regular working-class folks who are concerned about their safety in daily life, as they live it out in their communities. It's not the people who have the means to protect themselves in terms of fancy systems, but it's regular folks. It's folks who are working hard, trying to make ends meet and trying to eke out an existence in these troubled economic times, and we know that they're only going to get worse. But those are the folks who are worried about their safety, and rightly so. They have some concerns, and we have, then, a responsibility in this place to do everything we possibly can to prevent crime and to ensure that those who perpetrate crimes take responsibility for that action and take responsibility for what they have done.

We have to really approach the whole issue of youth justice in a way that is effective and in a way that is based on knowledge that has been accumulated for many, many years—for decades, in fact—around these very issues. It's not just knowledge that we've come to here in the province of Ontario, but of course this is an issue everywhere in the world. There is a lot of evidence that is out there that speaks to not only why crime occurs or the factors that lead to higher levels of crime in communities, but also what do you do, what are some of the methods that you use to reduce crime, to reduce the likelihood that crime is going to take place? Then, of course, the other side of the picture: Once someone is in the criminal justice system, how do you deal with that situation to reduce recidivism, which is to reduce the likelihood that they will reoffend once they are out of the system?

The biggest concern I think is that there's a real sense, from some of the debate already today, that the fear we have about the likelihood of being victims of crime is something that leads to this idea that there's an epidemic of crime out there, an epidemic of youth crime particularly, and assumes that there's an increase in youth crime

and that that is a result of lax punishment, that's a result of the fact that the penalties and punishments against young people are not strong enough, and therefore we have these wildly increasing crime statistics in the province of Ontario. It assumes there has been a shift from rehabilitation to denunciation and punishment. Basically, what it assumes is that if you focus on punishment as opposed to rehabilitation, then the result you're going to get is reduced crime. That's the assumption of that fear-based perspective that is out there and that is fanned by certain places. But the evidence is very, very clear, not just here in Ontario, not just in Canada, but in fact around the world, that severe punishment, particularly for youth crime, is not the best approach. Youth criminal justice needs to be based on prevention, rehabilitation and public safety, and it has to be informed by evidence, not by ill-founded assumptions about the merits of punishment and the possibility of deterrence.

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So, as I said earlier in my remarks in response to the member from Simcoe North, there is really no evidence of an epidemic of youth crime. Yes, there are individual incidents that we all completely abhor, that we think are absolutely unacceptable, that we rightly do not accept and are extremely vocal about, in terms of saying that we will not put up with this kind of violent crime when it occurs. But the incidents are not increasing by leaps and bounds, as some would say. In fact, as I mentioned earlier, Ontario has the second-lowest youth crime rate in all of Canada. The lowest youth crime rate, not surprisingly, is in the province of Quebec.

Moreover, many people like to think that punishment is something that is really going to reduce the likelihood of young people committing crimes. People think, "Well, gee, if you just put a big, scary punishment at the end, that's going to prevent young people from getting into trouble." But the reality is that punishment doesn't prevent or reduce crime. Stronger penalties do not deter youth offences.

The John Howard Society has a paper that outlines some of this theory in detail. It says, "Sentencing severity"—that means the severity of the sentence—"has no meaningful general deterrent value for young people, or anyone for that matter. People who commit crimes simply do not consider the length of the sentence they might face when making this often split-second decision."

If someone is about to commit a crime, they don't stop themselves and say, "Maybe I shouldn't commit this crime," and then think about all of the outcomes which are going to be occurring if they actually commit the crime. It's kind of ridiculous to think that's the case. Yet that is what some people believe and use as a basis for the way that they would like to deal with youth justice issues specifically.

In particular, for youth who commit very serious crimes, the rates of reoffence are the same, the evidence shows, regardless of the sentence. So that, again, is a piece of evidence that shows that the severity of the punishment has no impact on reoffence when it comes to

very severe crimes. The reality is that youth who commit crimes are people who have high impulsivity, low self-control, and often, as I've already mentioned in my earlier remarks, mental health concerns and addictions. So these are some of the things that are predictors of whether or not young people are going to be actively involved with the criminal justice system.

These kinds of factors mean that kids are not in a position to be able to make rational decisions. If they have a mental health problem, if they have problems with impulsivity, if they have low self-esteem, these kids are not going to just take a step back and rationally figure out whether or not they're going to be involved in a particular activity which they know is against the law. That's what the empirical evidence shows quite clearly.

Homicide rates in Canada have been falling since the abolition of capital punishment, since 1976. Since we got rid of capital punishment, those rates are going down. American states with the death penalty have higher rates of homicide than those who do not. California counties that enforce the famous three-strikes law did not show any decline in crime compared to other states.

Not only does deterrence not work, as the preponderance of evidence shows, when applied to youth, it is in contravention of international laws and covenants.

So the evidence is pretty clear. Oftentimes it's obfuscated so that other agendas can be brought to the fore, but the reality is severe punishment, particularly of young people, not only doesn't work but it is in contravention of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This convention requires that youth justice courts "impose sentences that ensure the care and protection of youthful offenders, that avoid the detrimental effects of detention as much as possible." Again, an international body that came up with the covenant which Canada signed on to, right? So we're all supportive of it. It says very clearly that the preponderance of evidence is what you need to really look at when you're determining how to deal with youth criminal justice.

Other UN rules mandate that youth sentences are minimal, proportional and in the child's interests. The NDP actually concurs with the John Howard Society, which holds that crime prevention is best addressed by addressing the underlying causes of youth crime. I raised this in my remarks to the minister's initial statement because it's absolutely where we need to focus. I was listening to some reruns this morning on CBC Radio of debates that were happening here in Toronto in regard to the federal election, and of course the youth crime issue came up. Once again, very, very clearly, the amount of applause that came when people were talking about, during that debate, when candidates, Olivia Chow particularly, from—what's Olivia's riding?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Trinity–Spadina.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you. The member for Danforth, Peter Tabuns, reminded me that Olivia's riding is Trinity–Spadina.

CBC radio did a debate that had federal candidates from various ridings coming together to have a debate

here in Toronto, and Olivia was very clear in her remarks—and it's consistent with what we believe at the provincial level as well, that it's about the roots of crime. It's about opportunities for young people. It's not about punishing at the end, after kids have had no opportunities whatsoever to choose a better way. So, when educated and informed, those kinds of principles are the ones that Canadians tend to stand for. Again, it was clear in the amount of support that Olivia got in her comments in debate, but it's also clear when you talk to people in depth about what it is that leads to crime with young people.

One principle for preventing youth crime is to remove the tools of crime from the hands of youth. New Democrats have been very clear and again, in the debate that was held in Toronto, Olivia was very clear as well: The New Democrats have advocated for, and will continue to support, a comprehensive handgun ban. It has to happen. It is required. There is no reason—no reason—for handguns to exist in the city of Toronto or anywhere else. In fact, I think that's almost word-for-word what she said in her debate: There is no need for guns in Toronto, period. And I would say in Toronto, in Hamilton, in Kingston, in Windsor, in Ottawa; in all communities, there is no need for handguns, period. So a handgun ban is a part of what we need to do when we're looking at how to reduce crime, particularly youth crime.

Another important approach to reducing youth crime is to build the child rather than fix the adult. This goes back to my comments around lack of affordable housing, lack of mental health supports, lack of addictions programs and services. Reducing child poverty, providing quality child care and early learning opportunities, investing in strong public schools and expanding community-based social and recreational programs for families are going to go much further in reducing crime than will an increased reliance on punishment.

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Simple community support programs, like home visits from nurses to low-income first-time teen moms in the US, have led to reductions in crime—and this is amazing. Crime rates of children have been reduced by up to 80% as a result of that program in this one jurisdiction in the States. All it took was a public health nurse to come and provide supports, education and help to a new 14-, 16- or 18-year-old, a young mom, a teenage mom. Instead of just blaming and shunning a teenage mom or a pregnant teenager, provide the supports that she needs. Get the public health nurse to come to her home to show her how to care for her child and teach her the kinds of signals a baby makes when certain things are occurring, whether it's hunger—usually it's hunger—or sometimes there's an uncomfortable piece of clothing chafing their skin or something like that. There are many, many ways to engage a brand new mom, particularly a teenage mom, in the ways to appropriately care for her child.

If you have that support coming in and you have that teen mom learning how best to take care of her baby, how to breastfeed, because we all know that that's the

best way to provide nutrition for a young baby—through breastfeeding—if we provide those supports, the evidence shows very clearly, in this particular jurisdiction, an 80% reduction in youth crime rates because of a program that focused on the early, early years of life. Again, it goes back to what the member from York-Simcoe said in her remarks and it goes back to what I've said in my remarks: These are the things the government needs to pay significant attention to because these are the things that are going to prevent young people from getting into trouble as they grow older.

Investments in programs like that are important, and maybe it takes a little bit of time for them to pay off, but as politicians we have a responsibility not only to act on the moment but to act for the future. We need to make changes today that might not show up today but that will make positive changes for the future. It's not always good and appropriate—in fact, oftentimes it's ineffective—to use a quick fix, a simplistic, sometimes, and misguided quick fix that we see so often that comes to the table. Fixes to profound social problems often take long-term investments and the long-term view. With that in mind, with that kind of framework in mind, if you will, let's turn to the specifics of Bill 103.

The minister brought this forward as a bill. It's interesting, because in her introductory remarks she talked specifically about how this bill was going to provide hope, it was going to provide opportunity, it was going to give kids a chance to make different choices, to be able to come out of the system and make different choices for their future. Then, of course, in my comments to her speech, I said, "I don't see how that happens in this bill." I was fairly critical of that remark, and then, when it came back to the minister to respond to my criticism, she said, "Really, it's just an administrative bill." Well, you can't have it both ways. You can't come out and spin this as a bill that's going to make all kinds of positive change—that's going to give kids a new chance, that kids who have been incarcerated are somehow going to be given all kinds of new opportunities and all kinds of hope for the future—and then turn around and take another step back when you're called on it and say, "Well, really it's just an administrative type of bill. It's really just administration."

This is the thing that's very frustrating, the propensity of the government to spin these things out like they're larger than life. If it's an administrative bill, it's an administrative bill. If it's a bill that's going to create huge change and positive impact, then, fine, I'm prepared to debate it within that context. But let's not pretend it is what it isn't, and let's get down to exactly what it is. The aim of the bill is to bring youth aged 12 to 17 under one single justice system, and that's a laudable goal, as I said earlier on.

It's the amendments to the Child and Family Services Act, and the overriding principle of the Child and Family Services Act is that it is supposed to be in the best interests of the child. That's the overarching theory, more or less. The limbo that the 16- and 17-year-olds have

been in the last couple of years and the last couple of decades has been an ongoing issue. The 16- and 17-year-olds, when they're in the youth justice system, have been in this no-person's land where they're not really getting the programs and services that they should be getting to try to provide some rehabilitation, to try to reduce the recidivism rates. That has not been happening, so this bill gets those kids who have been falling through the cracks over the last little while, kids that have not been able to get the programming they need in the wings of the adult facilities that have been set aside for their use, and provides them with the opportunity to be in with other kids in the criminal justice system, ages 12 to 15. So now instead of 12 to 15 in the Ontario system and 15 to 17 in the adult system, that all comes together and it's one system. It makes sense particularly with 16- and 17-year-olds because it provides some opportunity for the involvement of young people in their decisions around work and training, and that's a positive thing.

But there are some concerns that we have with the bill, and it's important to get those things on the table. The first one is that there has been a very disconcerting lack of consultation around the development of the bill. What we've found out is that not only were youth not consulted—again, it's the principle about consulting people who are going to be affected by legislation. Oftentimes you end up with a better product if at the beginning you build in the conversation with stakeholders and with people who are concerned. But with youth, oftentimes they're not considered to be legitimate stakeholders, right? "They're just young people, so we'll just dismiss them because we don't really care about their opinions. It's not really important." But it's very important.

This piece of legislation will have an impact on young people and so it's important to have an opportunity for young people to have a look at it in its drafting, in its preparation and perhaps—for sure; it's not a matter of "perhaps"—they can absolutely provide insights and suggestions to the government. But the arrogance of the government to not even bother to have any kind of consultation with a bill that specifically amends the Child and Family Services Act, which is the act that's supposed to be in the best interests of the child—of course, in typical fashion, "We don't want to find out what the children think is in the best interests of the child. That's not how we do things around here." I think it's a shameful lost opportunity. It's a shameful missed opportunity.

It's bad enough that young people were not at all consulted in terms of the drafting of this bill, but the child advocate was not even consulted in the drafting of the bill. We have an independent child advocate in Ontario: an advocate for children, a person whose job it is to advocate on behalf of and with—I have to say that our independent child advocate, Irwin Elman, is an extremely competent and skilled professional who's been working with young people for a very long time. The member from Pickering-Ajax was on the hiring committee and participated in the interviews along with myself and the member from Nepean-Carleton in regard to this. It's

quite interesting that we have this expert, really, that we've hired as the child advocate and the government didn't see fit to even let the child advocate know that there was a bill in preparation. That's problematic. That's really problematic.

We have found out that not only was he not consulted—this is Mr. Elman, our new child advocate—but in fact the staff of the advocacy office have no recollection of having been contacted or approached at all in regard to putting this bill together. That's not good form. In fact, it's very disconcerting that the government would not even consult the child advocate's office. It's even more disconcerting because in fact Bill 103 contains within it several amendments to the independent child advocate act. The very legislation that covers off the child advocate is being amended with Bill 103 and yet the advocate's office was not invited to participate in any way in the discussion.

I'll talk a little bit about some of the specifics around what those amendments are a little bit later, but that is poor form when it comes to consultation. It's really obvious that the government doesn't see their role as being collaborative in any way when it comes to youth criminal justice, and that doesn't send a good signal. The consultation was not satisfactory at all. Although some of the service providers say that they had some minor involvement in the drafting of the act, by and large there was very, very unsatisfactory participation, and much more consultation would have been useful.

1030

The second major issue is that there are parts of the bill that impact significantly, particularly on people who are granted authority under the auspices of the bill. There's a new authority that is granted to directors of facilities. These directors of facilities are given new powers, if you will, or new abilities to do various things under the idea that because of the 16- and 17-year-olds coming into the system, they need to expand their scope of power, their scope of opportunity to do certain things.

But one of the things that the bill allows authorities to do which is new is to open up e-mail and mail from children. Children are sending an e-mail or writing a letter, and this act now allows authorities to open that mail or read that e-mail before it gets sent.

The question becomes, to what extent is this new authority necessary, particularly with the younger kids? Is it necessary to intercept a 12-year-old's mail to her mom? I don't know. It's a question. It's something that we need to explore. To what extent is it necessary to have that kind of control over a young person's mail that they're sending out—not mail they're receiving in but mail they're sending out?

I get it a little bit—and I'll talk about that as well—wanting to intercept mail that's coming in, because you don't know what's in it and there could be concealed weapons or dangerous things in the mail. What I don't really see is the need, particularly with the younger children, to intercept their outgoing mail.

That's something that I think we need to spend some time on in committee. I'm actually looking forward to the

committee hearings because I believe this bill needs to have some time in committee. I believe that there are young people and people from the advocate's office, and I'm sure there are service providers as well, who will want to come and give some insights and remarks on the changes that this bill is undertaking in terms of youth justice. But some people think that some of those changes go a bit too far—and that is one of them, particularly.

Previously, mail had to be opened in the presence of a young person in cases where there was concern that there might be articles that were prohibited by the service provider, or the mail could be read if there were grounds to believe that the contents of mail could be causing emotional or physical harm to the child. Now, I'm not talking about the mail that goes out; I'm talking about the mail that comes in. In the previous system, any mail that came in, if there was a concern that it would be harmful or contraband, the service provider had to open that mail in the presence of the young person, so the young person knew that their mail was being intercepted. Now, with Bill 103, mail can be examined, read and withheld in whole or in part if "prejudicial to the best interests of the young person, the public safety or the safety or security of the place of detention or custody." It's expanding the powers of the facility to intercept, read, make a judgment call and ban the mail from going to the young person, without the young person's knowledge at all.

This is a significant difference and one that I think we need to delve into a little bit more. The question is, why was the criteria of physical or emotional harm in the previous bill expanded to be a more catch-all phrase, "best interests" of the child? The issue becomes that this section has become really broad now. The change has meant that there's a broadening of this section that allows providers to open any mail on the basis of a claim that it's possibly a public safety issue, including situations in which young persons are in foster care or in a group home. So it's not only pertaining to youth in secure custody, it's also pertaining to youth in any kind of facility. I don't know whether the government did that on purpose. I would imagine they did, but I'd like to know why. I'd like that know why this section broadens out the powers, not only within the secure custody situation, but also in all of the facilities where young people are staying as part of their sentence.

There's no mechanism at all to ensure that the child is aware that mail is being held. Not only is this broadening the opportunity to intercept mail and keep it, but also there's no obligation or no recognition or acknowledgment that needs to be provided to the young person that says that their mail has been intercepted and kept from them. So the child's right to send and receive mail is being replaced by the facility's right to intercept their mail. Previously, the law said mail "shall not be examined or read by the service provider or a member of the service provider's staff if it is to or from the child's solicitor." But the proposed law states that mail "shall not be examined or read under clause (b) if it is to or from the young person's solicitor, unless there are reasonable

and probable grounds to believe that it contains material that is not privileged as a solicitor-client communication."

You can't tell by the outside of a letter whether what's inside it is going to be covered by solicitor-client privilege. I mean, how do you tell by the outside of a letter what's on the inside; right? So who determines whether or not correspondence or communication is privileged? What rationale exists to interfere with mail between a young person and their legal counsel? I don't know. I don't know what that rationale is, and that's another reason why we need to get to committee, to try to explore where the government's mind was—collective mind, I guess—when they came up with this, because I really don't understand it at all.

In terms of visitors, "A service provider may impose such conditions and limitations upon persons who are visiting a young person ... as are necessary to ensure the safety of staff or young persons in the facility." It is crucial that this clause not apply to certain people. It shouldn't be up to the service provider of a facility to decide whether an MPP can visit that facility, to decide whether a child advocate or somebody from the advocate's office can visit that facility. An Ombudsman should be able to visit that facility. So I'm pretty concerned there is this new piece that prevents our watchdogs, if you will, that prevents the people in Ontario who are charged with making sure that these kinds of facilities operate the way they're supposed to operate, including ourselves around this room, from having the opportunity to visit these facilities. That's an extremely, extremely worrisome addition, or perhaps deletion, if you will, in terms of access to the facilities, and it's something I'm extremely hopeful the government will reconsider. I mentioned it to the minister informally as we were having a conversation earlier today. She was not aware that was in there, so I look forward to having a very serious discussion with her about the extent to which that piece particularly needs to be completely removed.

It used to be that MPPs could go into correction facilities. In fact, many of the most egregious abuses that have happened in correction facilities were found out, routed out and shut down because of the opportunity for MPPs to visit those places, to see what was going on there. Do we really want to remove that level of oversight from these facilities? I don't think so. I don't think it will serve anyone at all, particularly not young people who can—and not always, and again, this is not a painting of facilities in any way whatsoever, but it is an important principle that the facilities know there are levels of oversight in place to ensure those very few who might not be acting in the best interests of children are able to be held to account. It's extremely important.

1040

Here's another point altogether: The act expands criteria for secure detention. In other words, right now there is a way that secure detention is dealt with, but it doesn't really deal with open-custody situations. When someone is in secure detention, it's a process of ensuring

that there's attendance at court, for example, and that there's safety of the public and security in the place of detention. We have to be really, really careful about the expansion of the criteria for secure detention, about what it means to be in secure detention.

The use of custody prior to conviction should serve two ends, and two ends only: to prevent a dangerous person from harming others, and to ensure that they attend court. Those are the two pieces that are most important and that need to be there. Pretrial detention continues to be an unduly long process, as a result of the backlogs in the courts. There's a backup in terms of the amount of time that young people are left in detention. It shouldn't be a matter of using the pretrial period as a back door to providing that—I'm losing my concentration with all of the noise that's suddenly come into the chamber. It's been extremely quiet all morning, and all of a sudden—it's showtime pretty soon, so I'm beginning to lose my concentration.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We came to hear you.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Oh, thanks. The Minister of Education says she came to hear my speech, and now of course I can't concentrate on it, so that's put even more pressure on me.

Nonetheless, the point is this: Pretrial detention should not, as part of its goal, inflict a lesson on the youth or in any other way punish the youth. This goes back to the conversation earlier about the extent to which the punishment model simply does not work. So we have to be careful about sliding into this process which then allows the pretrial detention period to become a de facto early punishment or initial phase of punishment for the young person. That is not acceptable. Pretrial detention periods, as we know, because of the jam-up in the courts, because of how long it takes for things to get to trial, are becoming longer and longer and longer. So we have to be extremely aware of the fact that young people will be stuck in this limbo, without any programming, without any opportunities for rehabilitation or training or counselling or anything at all. They really do just sit in a tank waiting for their trial. We have to be extremely careful about detaining people unnecessarily.

I think it's particularly important to note that certain folks tend to show up in the criminal justice system more than others. We know that our First Nations aboriginal communities are overrepresented in the justice system. We know that people from racialized communities are overrepresented, compared to the general population. They're overrepresented in our criminal justice system, and we know, from some of the comments before, why some of that is.

We know that new immigrants have real challenges, particularly around finding a decent job. We know that we have a minimum wage here in Ontario that does not support families adequately. We know that we have a system of certification, or of recognition of credentials, for people who have great skills coming from other countries, that is not allowing them to be able to use those skills in a productive way to make decent earnings

here in Ontario. We know that there is no certification for unionization in this province, which reduces the likelihood of a decent wage.

I believe that I will be able to continue my comments on this bill when next we meet and when next the government calls Bill 103 for reading, so I'll leave it at that and look forward to the rest of the afternoon.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for debate has ended.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I take this opportunity to welcome some guests to the chamber today.

On behalf of the member from Oak Ridges–Markham: the grade 10 students from St. Augustine Catholic High School, who will be visiting Queen's Park today.

On behalf of the member from Eglinton–Lawrence: Tim Holman, father of Sarah Holman, the page from Eglinton–Lawrence, Paul Veary and Rayburn Veary, all seated in the east members' gallery. Welcome.

On behalf of page Paige Weller: her aunt Kristen Clarke and her cousin Coco Petracchi, in the west public gallery. Welcome today.

And some guests of mine who will be joining us soon in the Speaker's gallery: Ab Chahbar, Sam Chahbar and Dan Chahbar.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is for the Premier. Premier, yesterday you tabled a motion for a debate on the economy. Regrettably, this is, in our view, a totally insincere charade designed to give yourselves a pat on the back and leave Ontarians who are worried about their future with false hope. Premier, it's completely meaningless, because you haven't opened up the books and told Ontarians what the state of Ontario's finances are.

If you are truly looking for a legitimate discussion, will you commit to releasing a comprehensive statement on Ontario's finances before this debate begins?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm very much looking forward to having the opportunity to speak to economic issues.

I'll remind my honourable colleague that his leader, Mr. Tory, has, I believe on three separate occasions now, asked that we have just such a debate in this Legislature. I think it's important, not just for myself, but for all MPPs in this Legislature, to have the opportunity to speak to those kinds of issues which are concerning our families at the breakfast table. There is tremendous economic dislocation and uncertainty prevailing in the global

economy. I think it's important that we find a way to create an opportunity—which we've done here.

Failing this debate now, we'd have to wait until the budget, effectively, for members in this House to speak to it. We think it's time to speak to it right now, and that's what we're going to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Well, that response, like the motion, is self-serving and nothing less.

This morning, the Premier, in a scrum, said that we need to discuss in this House the things that people are talking about around the kitchen table. Well, families sitting around the kitchen table don't look over their household budgets without having in front of them their pay stubs, their bank statements or their credit card statements.

Premier, do you really believe you can fool the public with this stunt of yours—a shameful stunt, an attempt to dupe Ontarians? If you want to have a serious, substantive debate about the economy, show us the books. How much money does Ontario have? How deep is the hole that you've spent this province into?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There is a traditional approach that is brought by the opposition in traditional times of economic challenge and economic downturn. I would argue that this is an extraordinary event in terms of what's happening to our economy—not just here in Ontario but globally.

One of the reasons I'm eager to have all members participate in this debate is so that we can gain a better understanding, by sharing each other's perspectives, of what is happening out there. We'll have an opportunity to hear ideas, hopefully positive ideas, put forward by all members of this House, and using that information, we can help better inform the fall economic statement and we can help to inform the budget. We see it as a productive, important exercise in keeping with the values and desires of the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Now, this is the new Dalton McGuinty we're seeing here today. If you look back, he says we can't wait until March for a budget debate. But on June 4 this year, Premier, the Progressive Conservative Party—the official opposition—asked you for an emergency debate on the economy, along with a transparent financial update—four months ago; four long months ago. You've ignored the warning signs, you've demeaned concerns about the economy that both opposition parties have brought forward, and now you bring in a phony motion designed to hoodwink worried Ontarians. Is that your definition of leadership?

1050

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'll remind my honourable colleague that we released our second quarter economic results just last Monday. That's the latest information that we had available. We've made that public.

I just can't agree with my colleague. I think it's important for all of us to have this opportunity to speak to

those issues that weigh heavily on the minds of Ontarians. They're very concerned about the state of our economy. They're asking themselves questions about what is happening, not only here in Ontario but what's happening more broadly in the global economy. I see this as an important opportunity for Ontarians to speak to those issues and, again, to provide their particular perspectives on this, to share their insights in terms of what they might think is happening, to get a better sense of how external events are going to affect us inside, here in Ontario.

I see it as a positive, constructive opportunity to gain information, to inform our fall economic statement and later on our budget. I think it serves the people of Ontario.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Again to the Premier: You have to wonder how serious the Premier is about this emergency economic debate he has called for when he's jetting off to Mexico tomorrow and one of his economic ministers is basking in the Middle East sun.

But let's look at the motion that has been tabled. "Just as Ontario families do when finances get tight at home, the Ontario government should make adjustments as necessary to its finances." Premier, can you tell us: Just how tight are Ontario's finances, how much are the revenues down by and how much has spending increased?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Leader of the Opposition: I will remind him that last week we put out the most recent Ontario economic accounts. I would invite him to look at those. I would invite him to review the transcripts from the meeting of the 12 economists who hosted a breakfast the other morning. We had the opportunity to meet with them after.

There is no doubt that these are challenging economic times. I welcome the opportunity to hear from members of this House before the fall statement, as we line up our response to changing circumstances. According to the Fiscal Transparency Act, the members opposite have the information they need to form views and to form opinions. One need look no further than the front pages of every major daily to get expert opinion and analysis, and I look forward to your contribution and the contribution of your colleagues to this debate.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: As the minister and the Premier know, in the past two weeks we've asked on a number of occasions for a time speed-up, if you will, on the economic update, not leaving it until October 22. To debate today without that information in front of us is just a so-called debate; it's not a real attempt to find solutions. You can't find solutions if you don't know what the problems are.

Your motion says "the Ontario government should make adjustments." In Liberal speak, that means two things: a tax increase or a deficit. Premier, Minister, are you spending Ontario into a deficit or are you telling those hard-working families sitting around that kitchen

table that you're going to raise their taxes—or get ready for both? What is it?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We are taking a balanced, responsible, prudent approach to the challenges in the economy. We have laid out a five-point plan that we believe is delivering results today. This government's whole approach over the last five years has been oriented just to this time. That's why we started investing in post-secondary education with Reaching Higher. That's why we started ReNew Ontario, to be investing in infrastructure. That's why in about two weeks' time, municipalities across Ontario will be getting \$1.1 billion to start investing in that very infrastructure.

There is no doubt that there are real challenges in the economy. This government has laid out a plan. We look forward to the input of the opposition and the people of Ontario as we move forward in a challenging world economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I didn't hear much of an answer there. If the Premier really believed there was an emergency with the economy, truly sincerely, he wouldn't be sipping margaritas in Mexico while this debate is underway. Instead, he's wasting this House's time with a phony debate.

The great minds in the Premier's office—

Hon. George Smitherman: Is that what you did when you went travelling with Andy Brandt?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: —probably with the advice of Minister Smitherman, believe they can bamboozle the public. You can't have a debate on the economy without knowing the—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Just stop the clock for a second. Minister of Infrastructure, withdraw that comment that you just made.

Hon. George Smitherman: I withdraw.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: That's a typical response when we raise legitimate concerns, Speaker.

Premier, families can't make adjustments to their budgets if they don't know whether this government is going to raise their taxes or cut their services. For once, at a time when Ontarians are looking for candid and direct answers, why can't you be straight with them? Is this motion really designed to set the stage for deficits and increased taxes?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The partners in the Pan Am Games bid are delighted we are trying to get this \$2-billion net investment in Ontario that will create 17,000 jobs. I'm sorry you don't support those initiatives at this time. That's what transparency's about, dealing honestly with these situations.

We have laid out a plan. We look forward to hearing what you would do differently. We think your prescription to date of cutting corporate taxes at this time is not the only part of a comprehensive plan.

They have offered nothing but a bunch of pabulum. The people of Ontario are looking to this Legislature for

leadership. We need a debate on the economy. We welcome the opportunity for that debate so that we can further reinforce the appropriateness of our policy decisions to date and make adjustments as we go forward in a very challenging world economy.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. This afternoon, this House is going to be debating a government motion that essentially says to anxious Ontarians, "Your government agrees that Ontarians are facing hard economic times and that your jobs and savings are at risk, but there's absolutely nothing we can do about it."

Why doesn't the Premier spare us this afternoon's theatrics and admit right here and now that the motion is an admission that his government has no intention of implementing the bold new initiatives that are desperately required to deal with this economic crisis?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I welcome the question, and I say again to this honourable member that her leader also asked that we have a debate in this Legislature at the earliest possible opportunity, and that's exactly what we're going to do.

The member opposite says that they have other ideas—great. We look forward to hearing those. We look forward to having an opportunity here to get everybody's perspective on what is happening in the global economy, the impact that's having on Ontarians here.

We have a five-point plan in place. We're proud of that plan. We will continue to revise and strengthen that plan in order to further strengthen the Ontario economy, but I disagree with my colleague who says our plan is not working. I look forward in the supplementals to tell her exactly why we continue to make progress under that plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What the Premier is refusing to admit is that his government's lack of action over the past five years is directly responsible for Ontario's disastrous economic situation. The Premier knows very well that the 235,000 lost manufacturing jobs and the 40,000 lost forestry jobs have nothing to do with the global banking crisis. He knows very well that the economic crisis that has devastated Ontario's manufacturing and resource community has been unfolding over the past five years. He has been in power those past five years, and it's a direct result of his failed policies.

Why won't the Premier admit that all this afternoon's motion really is for is to say to Ontarians that his government has no clue as to what to do about the economic crisis that it has created in this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I say with the greatest of respect to my honourable colleague, for her to claim that somehow all that ails our domestic economy, the Ontario economy, is exclusively the result of Liberal government policies is incredible. Nobody believes that, and I'm confident that she understands that.

A number of years ago, we understood that if we're going to get the best jobs, we needed the best workers, so four years ago we put in place our Reaching Higher plan, and today we have 100,000 more young people in our colleges and universities. Years ago, we understood the value of investing in infrastructure, and because for three successive budgets we've invested billions of dollars in infrastructure, there are over 10,000 workers today in Ontario on Ontario construction projects. We've been on the job.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, the Premier's Reaching Higher plan put us at the bottom of the barrel; that's the reality. His five-point plan is a five-point failure. At a time when Ontarians want assurance that their government will be there to help them through the tough times, all this Premier can do is offer a resolution that is going to be debated this afternoon, a resolution that tells them that the policies they are going to get at this time of economic crisis are the very same policies that have already failed to prevent the collapse of Ontario's economic foundation in the first place. When will the Premier own up to the fact that his resolution is in fact proof that he has no plan, no idea about how to deal with the economic crisis, and that under his leadership, Ontarians are essentially on their own?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I talked about how our early and decisive action on education has landed 100,000 new spaces in our colleges and universities. We also have 50,000 more apprenticeship opportunities, and we have 10,000 more young people graduating from our high schools every year. I made reference to the fact that because of our early and decisive action on new investments in infrastructure we have some 10,000 people working on construction sites today in Ontario.

Something else we understood a long time ago was that it was going to become very important, in a knowledge-based global economy, that we become much more adept at turning our ideas, Ontarians' ingenuity, into products that are irresistible for sale to the world. So we created a Ministry of Research and Innovation, and so far, we've put out \$1.5 billion into over 1,000 research and commercialization projects. My friend may not like our plan, but she can't disagree that we have a plan and it is proving to be effective.

THUNDER BAY ECONOMY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Again, back to the Premier: This question is about a specific region. If there is a region that demonstrates just how badly this Premier's economic policies have failed, it's the Thunder Bay region. Since 2005, northwestern Ontario has lost 6,900 forestry-related jobs. In addition to this, Thunder Bay alone has lost 1,500 manufacturing jobs, or nearly one third of all of its manufacturing employment.

On October 22, this government is going to be delivering an economic statement. Will that statement, like this

afternoon's resolution, merely confirm that this government intends to continue with the failed economic policies that have already devastated communities such as Thunder Bay?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I've had the good fortune, during the course of the past five years, to visit the grand and great city of Thunder Bay on a number of occasions. I can tell you that I know they are experiencing real challenges, particularly insofar as it relates to the decline of the forest sector—something that is experienced in other parts of the country and, indeed, this continent, as my colleague well knows. But I can say that we've brought close to \$1 billion to the table for supports for the forestry sector.

We have made all kinds of new investments in the health sector in the city of Thunder Bay, whether it's the new medical school or new—I think it's the molecular research institute. We have invested in other kinds of manufacturing opportunities in that community as well.

The most important thing I want to say to the folks in Thunder Bay is that we've demonstrated our commitment to work with them. We are going to continue to find new ways to strengthen them. We're going to get through these challenging times the way we've always done that in Ontario: by working hard and working well together.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I've been to Thunder Bay as well, and I want to talk a little bit more about the blow that Thunder Bay has taken under this government. The unemployment rate there has risen by 30%, and fewer than half of Thunder Bay's unemployed even receive the federal employment insurance benefits. The Premier's inability to convince his own federal Liberal cousins on the need for EI reform is especially devastating to communities such as Thunder Bay. Failed fairness campaigns, weak resolutions and an economic statement that will provide very little, that's what this government is offering Thunder Bay. When will the unemployed workers there finally see a real plan from this government? Or will it be more of the same, all talk and no action?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Michael Bryant: It is in fact the case that the government is investing in advancing the technologies, making investments in the next-generation jobs, making the investments in that particular region in the particular industries that the member has already mentioned. It is getting ahead of that, as the government has been attempting to do over the past five years. That has been the government's plan, making those investments, not only in the knowledge economy in order to have those workers, the skilled workers and the apprentices, on the job, but also by making the changes in the technologies, so that those companies in that industry can be competitive in a global market. As innovation around the world changes, innovation has to change here. That's why the government made the investments in innovation, technology and manufacturing, in particular, around the forest industry—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What this government may not like are the cold, hard facts that we've been laying out all morning long. His "Fairness for Ontario" campaign flopped spectacularly, failing to convince even his federal Liberal cousins to make the EI reforms needed to protect laid-off Ontarians. This afternoon's economic resolution simply says to anxious Ontarians, "Don't expect your provincial government to be there in tough times. There is nothing we can do to help." That's what that resolution says, and on October 12, I fear it will be yet more of the same, with an economic statement that offers precious little to Ontarians.

Will the Premier stand in his place now and tell us it isn't so? When will he finally do something, or will he continue to wave a white flag, telling Ontarians that they are left to their own devices and that their government has nothing at all for them?

Hon. Michael Bryant: Some waving, some flag. An additional \$60 million invested in the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp—would the member say that's not doing nothing? No, I would say to the member. In fact, the member voted against it. Twenty-five million dollars to support the creation of a centre in Thunder Bay for research and innovation in the bioeconomy, focused on forestry—the member says that she's been to Thunder Bay. Really? Is that not an investment in that economy? Yes, it is; and you voted against it. Nine point seven million dollars to complete funding of Ontario's commitment to develop the Molecular Medicine Research Centre in Thunder Bay—those are real investments in the future jobs and future industries around innovation in Thunder Bay, and it's thanks to the local members of provincial Parliament for Thunder Bay and the leadership of this government. That is a serious investment in a great part of Ontario.

MUNICIPAL TAXATION

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for the Premier. Premier, beleaguered Toronto taxpayers—homeowners and renters alike—are reeling. The GTA housing market is down 3% and falling; in Toronto, it's down 6%. Your City of Toronto Act gave taxing powers to the one person who is happily ready to take you up on it. Telling the mayor of Toronto to go ahead and tax away is not my idea of protecting our citizens; it is blatant "not my problem" downloading. Mayor Miller has brought in the land transfer tax, the personal vehicle tax and the 3.8% property tax hike last year. When is this going to stop? Are you, Premier, going to let this man continue to beat the life out of Toronto?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I see our relationship, this Legislature's relationship, differently, obviously, from my honourable colleague. I think the people of Toronto have duly elected their representatives to make decisions on their behalf insofar as municipal issues are concerned, and that is in fact what is happening. Is the member

honestly suggesting that if we don't like what this particular council is doing, we ought to interfere? And if he doesn't like what this council is doing, does he have suggestions with respect to any other councils around the province with which we ought to interfere? I think we should let people, in their good judgment, elect those folks that they think will best serve the public interest and allow them to do their work.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Shurman: That is shifting the blame. The people of Toronto and Ontario are dealing with terrible financial hardships and fear for their future. The Premier's economic plan plus Mayor Miller equal a formula for disaster, and that is happening now. Yesterday, he told Torontonians to expect a 2% to 4% tax increase in the coming year. We are watching property values plummet by burdening Torontonians with more taxes, and it needs to stop. When, Premier, are you going to take some responsibility for your own actions instead of downloading taxing powers and blame to Mayor David Miller? Will you intervene and assist Torontonians now?

1110

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Something exciting is actually happening in the city of Toronto; my friend may have overlooked it. For the first time since I've been Premier, there are three commercial tower constructions taking place. You can find them at Bay and Adelaide; you've got the Telus tower and another—there are all kinds of exciting new investments taking place in the city of Toronto, so I'm just not as gloomy about Toronto prospects as my colleague.

I say again, I think it's important for us to understand the separation in terms of our responsibilities and the municipal council of Toronto and its particular responsibilities. I am not as eager as my colleague opposite to begin to interfere, intrude and insinuate myself either into the city of Toronto's responsibilities or any other municipal council's responsibilities, for that matter.

POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, having reviewed your economic motion to be tabled this afternoon, I see repeated listings of shared priorities, key priorities and multi-point plans, but try as hard as I might, I cannot find one single mention of the need for action to protect the most vulnerable Ontarians living in poverty or those who are developmentally disabled. There is no mention of the most vulnerable amongst us in this government's economic motion.

My question is a simple one to the Premier: Is this government, through its motion this afternoon, signalling its intent to renege on its commitment to the poor and the disabled?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think yesterday the Premier was as clear as clear can be that our commitment

to reduce poverty in this province is as strong as, if not stronger than, it has ever been before. When an economy is facing challenges, we need every single person to be at their very best. We need every child to get the education they need to be successful. We need every newcomer to get the skills they need to be at their very best in this economy. We need people with disabilities to be able to use their abilities for the benefit of themselves and for all of us. Our commitment is strong, stronger than ever.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Prue: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. What I just heard was a whole bunch of empty and flowery words. This government promised to reduce poverty by a specific amount with specific actions—the so-called 25 in 5. It promised to help the developmentally disabled and their families only a scant few weeks ago. I saw and heard nothing in the motion this afternoon or nothing in the minister's statement to this House just now that would confirm any of these plans. Rather, the government seems to mention poverty when it wants to lower expectations and talk about what it cannot do at this time.

Mr. Speaker, I have a question: Are the poor and the disabled destined to be the first casualties of the government's new five-point plan?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I appreciate that the member opposite is anxious for us to come forward with our poverty reduction strategy; so are we. That is why we are on track to release the poverty reduction strategy by the end of the year, as we committed to. We are working very hard to make sure we get it right. We are working very hard to make sure that it reflects what we heard on our consultations, because thousands upon thousands of people in Ontario have contributed to this strategy. We are taking the time to get it right, and I ask the member opposite to be patient—wait just a few more weeks—and we will be releasing this strategy on schedule.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: My question is to the Minister of Research and Innovation. With McMaster University, a world-class university in Hamilton, my constituents and I have been following the movement of the Minister of Finance's Bill 100, the Ontario tax exemption for commercialization, very closely. Although Bill 100 falls under the Minister of Finance, I've been hearing a great deal of criticism regarding the Ministry of Research and Innovation. Of interest to both the university-based and private sector innovations is the availability of venture capital. It was said in this House by a member of the Conservatives that "access to capital for small firms and start-ups is increasingly difficult" and that the government has "provided no adequate replacement." I've been telling the people of Hamilton who are working hard to create the jobs of tomorrow that our government invested \$90 million in the Ontario venture capital fund to address this issue. Minister, is the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank the member for the question. The Canadian Venture Capital and Private Equity Association wrote a letter to the federal leaders in this election and said, "Do you know what you need to do? You need to do what Ontario has done. You need to act as a catalyst to instill the venture capital market to come to the table and work with us to ensure that there's a sufficient supply of venture capital to take the great ideas that are created in this province and commercialize them right here." So I want to thank my predecessor, the Premier, for creating the Ministry of Research and Innovation, and for creating the Ontario venture capital fund, which today is up and running. Our \$90-million investment has now been leveraged by the private sector. It stands at some \$205 million. If that fund were to be created today, I think, given the turmoil, that there would be some difficulty. But because of the wise leadership of our Premier, we've created that fund. It is up and running and open for—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Supplementary.

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: I'm glad to hear that the Ontario venture capital fund has been so successful and is being used as an example of what needs to be done by experts in the field.

Another concern of the researchers at the university is the amount of funding that is invested in basic research. I think of the example of the laser. When Einstein first thought of the laser, many thought it would have no practical use. Looking back, we now know that Einstein was far ahead of his time. In fact, it would be difficult to visualize what the world would be like today without lasers for watching a DVD or listening to a CD.

A member from the third party said that the NDP believes in basic research. The member said we must ask ourselves what discoveries we are sacrificing by diverting funds from basic research. Minister, is funding being diverted from basic research? Can you outline examples?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I had a discussion with my good friend the member from Hamilton Mountain, and we were surprised by those comments made by the third party. When we invested, in the last budget, an additional quarter of a billion dollars into research, do you know who voted against that? The NDP. They voted against a quarter of a billion dollars. That adds up now to \$625 million for research, basic research, the kind of research that's going on at McMaster University, one of our world-class universities. Since 2003, our government has invested just under \$76 million into 214 projects at McMaster University. So if they're going to stand up for McMaster in Hamilton, then you have to support our researchers. That's why we voted for the increase. I want to thank the Minister of Finance for thinking ahead and understanding that we needed to put more great ideas in the pipeline, more great ideas for Hamilton and for McMaster, and we're proud of our voting record on this side of the House.

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: I have a question for the Premier: As you know, homeowners across Ontario are opening their mailboxes to find massive property assessment increases that will result in higher property taxes for many Ontario families and seniors. To make matters worse, while many Ontario families and seniors are now seeing declines in the value of their homes, you decided to lock them into assessed values as of January 1, 2008, at the height of a hot housing market, for four years. Premier, given these uncertain economic times, is it appropriate to whack people with massive assessment increases and then to lock them in at inflated values, with no relief until 2012?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Seniors and others in Ontario need to know that those assessments do not lead to tax increases. And that—

Interjections.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: They may want to laugh at the economic circumstances. We don't. We introduced in my last budget a property tax credit for seniors. That property tax credit will come in very handy next year. It will be phased in starting in January. That member voted against it. If anybody needs to reconsider a policy, it's that member and his party. We are standing behind Ontario's—

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The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Not only are families going to be whacked with property tax increases because of your new assessment scheme; they're seeing higher taxes, higher utility costs and higher costs for basic groceries, and these past two weeks they're seeing their savings and investments evaporate before their very eyes. During this time, you've also proposed to hit Ontario families and seniors with a brand new tax on tires, computers, televisions, microwaves and other consumer goods.

Minister, when you were speaking about Stéphane Dion's new plan to increase taxes through his so-called green shift, you said that "massive shifts in tax burden at a time when there's uncertainty" would be a mistake. Will you take your own advice and scrap the new McGuinty tax on tires and electronic goods?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member opposite knows full well that there is no tax increase on those items. I will charitably suggest that he is mischaracterizing what the government has done to ensure we have a good system of recycling that may save taxpayers money.

There is no question that we are in challenging times. Only one party—only this government—has laid out a plan that invests in those areas we can invest in that will see Ontario through these challenging times.

We believe that the investments we are making are the right ones. We wish they'd support the notion of a debate on the economy. We look forward to what they have to

say, and to what others have to say. We will lead Ontario through these challenging times, and we will be better and stronger when we're done.

LABORATORY SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Last week, the minister denied cutting funding to Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare and other hospitals that have been successful in an 11-year pilot project to do community-based lab testing. I have this letter from the ministry to Barry Lockhart, chief executive officer of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare, dated August 14, 2008, which says, "This letter is to provide notice to you that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is hereby terminating" funding to this pilot project between the minister, Gamma-Dynacare and Algonquin Healthcare.

Can the minister clarify for us today if he is responsible for the termination of this lab project?

Hon. David Caplan: I'm happy to comment, as I did last week, that in 1997 there was a pilot project that we set up around lab services in Muskoka. It was independently evaluated, and the determination that was jointly arrived at was that it would be better, in fact, to provide laboratory services in the same manner in which all Ontarians receive them.

The member makes allegations that somehow there are reductions in services. That is simply untrue. All that is happening here, on the basis of independent advice and the evaluation of this particular service, is not to continue with the pilot, and to return the service to the exact same basis on which Ontarians right across the province receive it. That's what I said last week, and that's what I say today.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Minister, I agree there was a review. The review showed that the community-based lab testing done by the health centre was excellent and should be continued. We have a letter from the North Simcoe Muskoka LHIN that says they did not make that decision. We have arguments coming from Muskoka Algonquin health centre's CEO. He says he argued with the government, saying that the community-based lab increased productivity, reduced application and shortened the time to receive results. It makes bulk purchasing more effective, the volumes help them retain expertise, it makes it easier to cover the 24/7 in-patient lab, it sustains what they call bench strength in the lab in case of emergencies, local physicians prefer it—the list goes on and on. The LHIN doesn't want it closed, the hospital doesn't want it closed and he's telling me that the ministry doesn't want it to close. Can the minister tell us today if he will guarantee that his government will continue to adequately fund—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Hon. David Caplan: The government is adequately funding the service and will continue to adequately fund the service. I can say that to the member directly.

But, in fact, the ministry is working very closely with the community lab provider, the Muskoka Algonquin

Healthcare hospital and the North Simcoe Muskoka Local Health Integration Network in the transition and planning process to ensure that all residents of the pilot communities in Bracebridge, Huntsville and Burks Falls continue to have the timely access they would expect to have for laboratory services in their community. In fact, that's precisely why they had the evaluation of the pilot, and it was determined that this would be the best way to provide those particular services.

Regrettably, this member has tried to suggest that somehow services are being eliminated or reduced, which is simply not the case. I would hope that the member would stand in her place and correct her record and indicate that these facts that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Minister, you finished sitting before the estimates committee yesterday, and I wanted to ask you a question regarding one of the issues that came up during the hearings.

The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek made a number of assertions and allegations regarding section 50 reprisals and the role of the Ministry of Labour's safety inspectors. Minister, could you take some time to elaborate on the roles and responsibilities of Ministry of Labour inspectors and how they perform their duties to ensure the enforcement of the Occupational Health and Safety Act?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I want to thank the fine member for Ottawa–Orléans for the question and bring some clarity to what did take place in estimates yesterday.

It's important to understand that the Ministry of Labour's inspectors do respond when a violation of a provision of the Occupational Health and Safety Act is alleged. Our health and safety inspectors visit workplaces where the reprisal has taken place to investigate the health and safety concerns related to that complaint. This may result in an inspector issuing orders for any underlying health and safety violations that may lead to the reprisal of that complaint.

Section 50 reprisals are addressed by the Ontario Labour Relations Board. If the employee is represented by a union, though, the employee can ask for an arbitrator to review and conduct that in place of the employer. If a worker files a reprisal complaint with the Ontario Labour Relations Board—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: There are a number of constituents who have contacted my office regarding a complaint that they had before the Ontario Labour Relations Board. Their concern is primarily about how long it takes to get a decision from the Ontario Labour Relations Board. Can you please tell us how many complaints the Ontario Labour Relations Board has received in the last year,

how many of those cases were settled by the parties in discussions with labour relations officers and how many are outstanding?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Again to the member: If the Ontario Labour Relations Board decides that there has been a reprisal, it has a broad range of remedies available to address that reprisal.

In regard to the number of complaints we had, in 2007-08 the Ontario Labour Relations Board received 184 complaints under section 50 of the act alleging wrongful discipline or discharge for acting in compliance with the act. Of this number, 83 cases were carried from 2007-08. Of the 184 cases, 68 were settled by the parties in discussion with labour relations officers, 26 cases were dismissed, five cases were granted and the remaining 81 are pending. Furthermore, the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour inspectors is to ensure that our workplaces in the province of Ontario meet the standards of the Occupational Health and Safety Act—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is for the Premier. In these tough economic times it is especially important for government to tighten up its spending and make sure that all programs and expenditures are efficient, necessary and based on real results. It is the right of Ontario taxpayers to know exactly where their hard-earned money is going and what they are receiving in return. For example, the Minister of International Trade and Investment is in the Middle East, and despite our best attempts, we have received no information regarding the cost of the trip, the itinerary, the companies that are involved or the expectations. So much for transparency. For instance, what kind of companies are accompanying the minister? Are they construction companies taking advantage of the development boom in Abu Dhabi, Dubai or Saudi Arabia?

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Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm very pleased that on behalf of Ontarians we now have a minister exclusively devoted to pursuing international trade opportunities.

Minister Papatello is in the United Arab Emirates. She is working hard to attract new investment to Ontario. I believe this is Ontario's first-ever mission to that part of the world. She's leading 20 Ontario companies. She's meeting with a number of companies in the following sectors: design and engineering, energy, climate change, sustainable development, investment firms, construction, small business and airlines. I think that's exactly the kind of initiative that Ontarians want us to pursue, and that's why Minister Papatello is over there now.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Thank you, Premier, for that answer. That was actually an answer, and I appreciate that.

There are construction companies in that list. Premier, the Oakville Hospital is being delayed because there's a

lack of ability of Ontario construction companies to build that hospital, according to you. Yet here you are sending construction companies over to Dubai, over to Abu Dhabi, over to Saudi Arabia to build buildings there. I would suggest, Premier, that those construction companies should be building a hospital in Oakville and not going over to Dubai to build buildings there.

Premier, will you bring those construction companies home to build a hospital in Oakville, where Ontarians need medical care?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

Hon. George Smitherman: To the honourable member's question: Indeed, because Ontario has been so dedicated to rebuilding infrastructure, much of which was a deficit left behind by the previous government, it has been the case, most certainly in Oakville and in one other circumstance in the province of Ontario, that we have had to somewhat slow our very, very ambitious and aggressive schedule of rebuilding the hospital capital infrastructure.

I can tell the honourable member that it is possible for companies on the one hand to be active in the Ontario market and on the other hand to look for opportunities to expand further. We'll work with all of those companies and make sure that the strong foundation and skills that they have because of our infrastructure investments give them the opportunity to be active in other jurisdictions. This is about exporting our skills and gaining revenue for the people of the province of Ontario.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. We have reached a new milestone in the province—I'll be nice today, for your benefit. I have heard some very interesting election advertisements paid for by the federal Liberal Party. One ad calls Ontario Canada's rust belt. Premier, do you agree with your federal counterparts?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I'm happy to say to the member that this is a very interesting week on the federal election front, if the speaker wishes me to speak to it. Finally, albeit arguably too little, too late, there is a recognition of the importance of making investments in industry directly by way of the federal government's investment, however modest, in the auto industry. Finally this parade that has been led by Premier Dalton McGuinty sees some interest in it from the Prime Minister, no doubt with the federal finance minister kicking and screaming.

That is the approach, that is the future and these are the issues, as Ontarians consider the Premier's fairness campaign, that Ontarians will be making decisions upon in the next week.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Paul Miller: It was bad enough when the federal Conservative Jim Flaherty said that Ontario was the last

place to put your investment dollars, but now we have the federal Liberals calling Ontario Canada's rust belt. Premier, can you do the right thing for Ontario and implement the NDP's three-point plan—institute a Buy Ontario program, create a refundable Ontario manufacturing tax credit and implement an industrial hydro rate? When will you do the right thing for Ontario? And wasn't I nice today?

Hon. Michael Bryant: Yes. It's relative, but yes.

Fighting for Ontarians is exactly what this government has committed to throughout the duration of the federal election. The Premier has come forth and said that he is not going to endorse a party. He wants Ontarians to think about the fairness campaign and make decisions based upon the reality that Ontario is not getting its fair share of the fiscal federalist funds. In fact, Ontarians' tax dollars are going out of Ontario, and Ontarians are being, frankly, discriminated against on a per capita basis when it comes to health care, funding for new Canadians and a host of other areas. That is what this government's fighting for, that's what the Premier's fighting for, and I'm sure the member, with his new genteel and affable demeanour, will be fighting for the same thing too.

DIAMOND MINING

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and it's regarding the De Beers Victor diamond mine in northeastern Ontario.

As I'm sure the members of this House are aware, De Beers Canada officially opened their Victor mine this past July. It's approximately 90 kilometres west of Attawapiskat, in the James Bay lowlands. This is the first diamond mine in Ontario, and we are thrilled to see it officially in production and open.

In addition to the \$1 billion that De Beers has invested in the development of this mine, the 1,100 construction jobs and approximately 400 new full-time jobs, I understand that the mine is expected to create \$6.7 billion in GDP economic impact in Ontario. This is significant.

Could the minister elaborate on his recent trip to the Victor mine and what this opening means for Ontarians?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thanks to the member for Huron-Bruce, who, the members will also know, cares a great deal about mining, as she represents the community of Goderich, home to the largest salt mine in North America, which is a great thing.

In terms of the Victor diamond mine opening, it was incredibly significant in a number of ways. It's certainly the beginning of a definitive diamond industry here in Ontario, and it's a business model of industry partnering with First Nations and local communities.

I did have the pleasure of attending the official opening of the Victor diamond mine on July 26. The thing that continually struck me and stays with me still was the overwhelming sense of optimism and pride that people felt there, whether it was workers, staff, De Beers execu-

tives, or the elders who were in attendance. There was a strong sense that this project was a very positive thing.

There are many other value-added diamond opportunities, but perhaps I'll get a better chance to discuss those in my supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): You will. Supplementary.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Minister, I know that all the members of this House appreciated your impressions of the official opening of the Victor mine, and I know that they will be equally interested to hear about future opportunities in the diamond industry, moving forward. I'm sure members will be particularly interested in what steps our government is taking to ensure that the Ontario economy benefits from this great resource that we have.

Specifically, Minister, I would like to know what effect the success of De Beers's Victor project has had on diamond exploration activity in other parts of Ontario. Also, Minister, now that we have a producing diamond mine that's up and running, what is our government doing to create and capitalize on a value-added diamond industry here in this province?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: That's a great question. There's no question that diamond exploration both in northeastern and northwestern Ontario has taken off in recent years, in some measure because of the De Beers mine. Currently, there are more than 25 companies exploring across the north for diamonds, with estimated expenditures of \$29 million in 2007.

I'm also proud to inform the House that as a result of an agreement in principle between the McGuinty government and De Beers Canada, we have taken the next step to expand our new diamond industry. The agreement between De Beers and the province means that 10% of the Victor mine production, by value, will be made available for activities such as cutting and polishing in Ontario. That's an estimated \$25 million a year worth of rough stones to be processed right here in Ontario. This opens the door to a vibrant Ontario diamond cluster that could one day include diamond trading, jewellery manufacturing, marketing and tourism, among others. This is a very, very good story for the province of Ontario.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: My question is to the Minister of Education.

Minister, on October 2 you stood in your place and said, "We believe that if we can capture kids who maybe are disengaged from school and get them interested ... they'll stay in school, they'll graduate and they'll be a functioning part of our economy."

It appears that you have already decided that some students are more important to save than others. Minister, if you feel so strongly about engaging our youth, why did you and Minister Best refuse to support the CARES program that administers cost-effective general education diplomas to high-risk youth in your fourth-quarter allocation earlier this year? Why do you refuse to

reallocate funds to this program? It's not new money, Minister.

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Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The policy of this government and our actions to date have created opportunities for kids who have been disengaged from school, who have become re-engaged in school and who are graduating. The fact is we've got 10,000 more students graduating from high school every year. That is a testament to the programs that we've put in place.

If the member opposite is talking about GED certification, I would ask her to have a conversation with the ILC, which is the Independent Learning Centre, and with TVOntario about what we're trying to do to make sure that more adult students, particularly in the north, have an opportunity to complete the GED. In fact, our record on adult education goes far beyond anything that the previous government ever dreamt of.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Minister, as a parent and grandparent, it really breaks my heart to see these young people who have been failed by their parents, failed by the system and failed by the government. They are at the mercy of a very violent high-risk district.

Minister Wynne, I want you to look in the gallery. Jessica Mackay is in the gallery today; she's a single mother of two. She was referred to CARES through corrections. She admits that if it had not been for CARES, she would be buried alongside 21 of her friends, she would be on welfare, or she would be in jail. CARES has helped Jessica turn her life around, and she is now enrolled in a college corrections program. She intends to pay it forward, Minister.

Currently, the program is only funded through non-government money. As Minister of Education, how can you justify denying these high-risk youth the right to an education and hope for a productive life?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: First of all, I would be happy to meet with Jessica. I'm not aware of this particular case. I'd be absolutely happy to meet with her.

I know that at the end of the year there are always a number of organizations that come forward looking for financing. What I can tell you is that we are working systematically to increase capacity in adult education so that in 2008-09, there will be a \$7-million increase in our adult education programming. The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and I are meeting together to coordinate.

The member opposite will know that I wrote a report, when I was parliamentary assistant to Minister Gerard Kennedy, that talked about our concerns around the lack of systematicity in adult education. We are working to coordinate that, to make sure that the resources are there and to make sure that the right programs get funded.

As I said, I would be happy to talk to this young woman.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. A few weeks ago, I visited the village of Weston in northwestern Toronto. I got the chance to meet with the members of the Weston Community Coalition. They're worried about your government's fast-tracking approach to the environmental assessment that's going to put Blue22 across that city and basically divide that community in half. We want to know, and they want to know: Why are you allowing this fast-tracking of the system?

Hon. John Gerretsen: As the member well knows, one of the ways in which we deal with our greenhouse gas emissions and one of the ways in which we can improve our environment is to get more public transit out on the roads. This government has got about 52 projects on the go right now, at a cost to us of about \$17.5 billion. It's all intended for one purpose only: to get cars off the road and people using transit. We felt that the proper thing to do was to have an environmental assessment done with respect to transit within a six-month time period. That's why it was done.

I know there are some issues with respect to the whole Weston situation. Certainly, our member there has brought them forward on numerous occasions; he has been a strong advocate for that.

We want to make sure that we get the transit projects up and running as quickly as possible, having due regard to the environment as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: First of all, you should get your own facts right, Minister, because the community of Weston is not saying no to Blue22. They're saying they need to have a system of crossing that's not going to cut their community in half. They understand, as everybody else does, that we need to move to public transit. The second part is, this is a private project. Why didn't we do it with GO in some sort of public investment?

But the question is this: You as the government made a promise that you would in fact do a full EA. Why are you breaking your promise to the people of Weston and fast-tracking this EA, and shortchanging the people of Weston with their concerns?

Hon. John Gerretsen: In actual fact, it will be up to the proponent, which I understand is Metrolinx in this case, as to what system they want to use, whether or not they want to continue with the old environmental assessment or utilize the new six-month rule. We think that the six-month rule with respect to transit is the right way to go as far as environmental assessments are concerned because we want to get as much transit on the books and actually in use by the people of Ontario and Toronto as quickly as possible. And I'm sure that your own Toronto members totally agree with that.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Mr. Khalil Ramal: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, the issue of emer-

gency waiting times is well-known to all the members of this House. This issue is not new; this is something that my constituents in London-Fanshawe have been coming to my office and telling me about. This summer, the London Health Sciences Centre issued a bed alert because the hospital's critical care beds were operating at full capacity; that is, they were filled with ill patients who could not be moved to make room for other patients. What steps is the minister taking to alleviate this problem?

Hon. David Caplan: I want the member to know—and I appreciate the question from him—that I have confidence in our hospitals to take care of the critically ill patients. I'm going to continue to work with our partners in health care to develop better strategies to reduce ER wait times.

Our government has committed to tackling emergency room wait times and has invested \$109 million in a comprehensive strategy that includes ways to reduce ER waits both inside and outside of the hospital. We enlisted the help of Dr. Allan Hudson to be our wait-times czar. We're setting ER wait-time targets, providing incentives to hospitals to meet those targets. We've invested close to \$2 million in the South West LHIN to provide increased community alternatives to hospital care such as home care. We've also invested \$45.6 million to develop 608 long-term-care beds in London to improve quality of life for our seniors to better alleviate the pressures in our hospitals.

There's a great deal more to do. I appreciate the advocacy of the member from London-Fanshawe.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Hon. Dwight Duncan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I rise to correct something that I said in the House last week. It will take me a moment to describe it. In May, I believe, the member for Beaches-East York, Mr. Prue, raised an issue regarding the assessment of so-called granny flats. He again raised the issue in June and I undertook to respond to him. We did not at the time. Through you to the member, I want to apologize for that oversight on our part.

I do want to report to the House and to the member that as a result of his inquiry and diligence on this particular file, we are going to be bringing forward an amendment to the Assessment Act to deal with it. I wanted to thank him for that and for raising the issue with us.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask the members to join me in welcoming the former member from Kenora, 34th, 35th and 36th Parliaments, in the east members' gallery: Frank Miclash. Welcome today.

And welcome three guests of mine, Ab, Dan and Sam Chahbar from London, in the Speaker's gallery. Welcome today.

PETITIONS

BEER RETAILING AND DISTRIBUTION

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'm pleased to read this petition which has been collected by Derek Forward, who joins us in the east members' gallery today.

"Whereas the current system" of beer distribution, "practice and" management "of retailing and distributing beer in the province of Ontario—and more specifically, the 'near monopoly' of The Beer Store—severely restricts the accessibility, convenience and choice for retail consumers of beer in Ontario; and

"Whereas The Beer Store 'near monopoly' is controlled by 'for-profit, foreign-owned companies' and these companies are not accountable to the people of Ontario, and these companies do not act in the best interests of the people of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That legislation be introduced that will permit the retailing and distribution of beer through alternative and additional grocery and supermarket retail channels that will fairly compete with The Beer Store, thereby allowing an accessible, convenient, safe, well-regulated and environmentally responsible retailing environment for beer to become established in the province of Ontario."

I'm pleased to sign this petition, which numbers just over 10,000 signatures to date. I pass it to my page, Michael.

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HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Joe Dickson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Rouge Valley Health board reversed the 2006 announcement closing the maternity and pediatric services at the Ajax-Pickering hospital due to an overwhelming public outcry; and

"Whereas the Rouge Valley Health board of directors has recently approved closing the 20-bed mental health unit at the Ajax-Pickering hospital; and

"Whereas there remains further concern by residents for future maternity/pediatric closings, particularly with the new birthing unit at Centenary hospital, which will see 16 new labour, delivery, recovery and postpartum (LDRP) birthing rooms and an additional 21 postpartum rooms opening this fall in 2008, even with the Ontario Ministry of Health's largest-ever expansion of the Ajax-Pickering hospital; and

"Whereas there is a natural boundary, the Rouge Valley, that clearly separates the two distinct areas of Scarborough and Durham region;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Central East Local Health Integration Network (CE-LHIN) and the Rouge Valley Health System

(RVHS) board of directors review the Rouge Valley Health System makeup and group Scarborough Centenary hospital with the three other Scarborough hospitals; and

"Further, that we position Ajax-Pickering hospital within Lakeridge Health, thus combining all of our hospitals in Durham region under one Durham region administration."

I will affix my signature to this and pass it to Asha.

BEER RETAILING AND DISTRIBUTION

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the current system, practice and arrangement of retailing and distributing beer in the province of Ontario—and more specifically the 'near monopoly' of The Beer Store—severely restricts the accessibility, convenience and choice for retail consumers of beer in Ontario, and

"Whereas The Beer Store 'near monopoly', is controlled by 'for-profit, foreign-owned companies' and these companies are not accountable to the people of Ontario, and these companies do not act in the best interests of the people of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That legislation be introduced that will permit the retailing and distribution of beer through alternative and additional grocery and supermarket retail channels that will fairly compete with The Beer Store, therefore allowing an accessible, convenient, safe, well-regulated and environmentally responsible retailing environment for beer to become established in the province of Ontario."

I've signed this.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: "Whereas the CARES program has successfully mentored 1,500 high-risk youth throughout their challenging pursuit of a general education diploma; and

"Whereas the high-risk youth in the CARES program have been referred by law enforcement, correction services, family and children's services and Ontario Works as a proactive step towards changing their lives and giving these youth a chance to succeed; and

"Whereas children should not be written off by the government but offered the chance to better themselves and the lives of their children through their own merit; and

"Whereas the general education diploma should be a right in the province of Ontario, not a privilege; and

"Whereas the province has repeatedly funded high-risk youth activities in community centres and agencies across this province;

"We, the undersigned, ask the Minister of Education to provide CARES with the funding necessary to continue to provide mentoring, counselling services and a

general education diploma to high-risk youth in the province of Ontario.”

I agree with this petition. I will sign my name to it and give it to page Scarlett.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition from a number of constituents in my riding. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children’s Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children’s relationships with their parents and grandparents;

“Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

“Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents; and

“Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

“Whereas subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant’s willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child;

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children’s Law Reform Act as above to emphasize the importance of children’s relationships with their parents and grandparents.”

As I agree with this petition, I shall affix my signature and send it to the table.

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. Frank Klees: I rise to table several hundred signatures in support of Bill 25, An Act to proclaim April 2 Pope John Paul II Day in Ontario, by members of the St. Stanislaus-St. Casimir Polish Parishes Credit Union, forwarded to me by the Catholic Youth Studio, and also from St. Anne’s Catholic Women’s League in St. Thomas, Ontario. The petition reads as follows:

“Whereas the legacy of Pope John Paul II reflects his lifelong commitment to international understanding, peace and the defence of equality and human rights;

“Whereas his legacy has an all-embracing meaning that is particularly relevant to Canada’s multi-faith and multicultural traditions;

“Whereas, as one of the great spiritual leaders of contemporary times, Pope John Paul II visited Ontario dur-

ing his pontificate of more than 25 years and, on his visits, was enthusiastically greeted by Ontario’s diverse religious and cultural communities;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to grant speedy passage into law of the private member’s bill by Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees entitled An Act to proclaim” April 2 “Pope John Paul II Day” in Ontario.

As a proponent of this bill I’m pleased to add my signature.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: This petition is about fairness for the people of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the federal government gives more support for economic development, health care and infrastructure to other parts of Canada, and unemployed workers in Ontario get less employment insurance support than in other parts of Canada;

“Whereas the federal system of taxes and equalization extracts over \$20 billion from the people of Ontario every year above and beyond what Ottawa invests in Ontario;

“Whereas laid-off workers in Ontario get \$4,630 less in employment insurance than they would get if they lived in another part of Canada;

“Whereas federal health care money is supposed to be divided equally among all Canadians, but right now Ontario residents are shortchanged by \$773 million per year;

“Whereas the federal government provides economic development support for people living in the north, Atlantic Canada, Quebec and the west, but provides no economic development support for southern Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that the federal government stop gouging the people of Ontario and treat them fairly.”

Since I agree, I’m delighted to sign my signature to this petition.

GASOLINE PRICES

Ms. Laurie Scott: “Petition for Gas Tax Fairness.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the skyrocketing price of gasoline is causing hardship to families across Ontario; and

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government charges a gasoline tax of 14.7 cents per litre to drivers in all parts of Ontario; and

“Whereas gasoline tax revenues now go exclusively to big cities with transit systems, while roads and bridges crumble in other communities across Ontario; and

“Whereas residents of rural communities in Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock have been shut out of provincial gasoline tax revenues to which they have contributed; and

"Whereas whatever one-time money has flowed to municipalities from the McGuinty Liberal government has been neither stable nor predictable and has been insufficient to meet our infrastructure needs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to redistribute provincial gasoline tax revenues fairly to all communities across the province."

I'm going to hand this to page Sarah.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Mike Colle: I've got another petition asking for fairness for the people of Ontario:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the federal government's employment insurance surplus now stands at" a staggering "\$54 billion; and

"Whereas over 75% of Ontario's unemployed are not eligible for employment insurance because of Ottawa's unfair eligibility rules; and

"Whereas an Ontario worker has to work more weeks to qualify and receives fewer weeks of benefits than other Canadian unemployed workers; and

"Whereas the average Ontario unemployed worker gets \$4,000 less in EI benefits than unemployed workers in other provinces and thus ... are not qualifying for many retraining programs;

1200

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to press the federal government"—whoever it may be—"to reform the employment insurance program and to end the discrimination and unfairness towards Ontario's unemployed workers."

I fully support Ontario's unemployed workers, and I affix my name to this petition.

STROKE THERAPY

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is a complete lack of government-funded outpatient therapy for stroke survivors upon discharge from hospital in the city of Cambridge; and

"Whereas, on October 29, 2004, a state-of-the-art government-funded outpatient day hospital program, which included therapy programs for stroke survivors discharged from the hospital, was cut by the Cambridge Memorial Hospital due to a lack of provincial funds;

"We, the undersigned stroke survivors, caregivers, family members and friends of stroke survivors in Cambridge, Ontario, draw your attention to the following:

"That the absence of a government-funded outpatient therapy program leaves many stroke survivors who are unable to pay for private therapy with a gap in services. As a result of this lack of therapy, many survivors despair and regress; and

"That therapy is critical to restoring a survivor's ability to function and become rehabilitated and reintegrated in the community, as opposed to being forced to enter a long-term-care facility, thus saving the system money while greatly improving the quality of life for stroke survivors and their families; and

"That outpatient therapy is relatively inexpensive. A full-time physiotherapist, occupational therapist and a half-time speech pathologist and social worker required to deliver the service cost less per day than one bed in the hospital;

"Therefore we request that the Ontario government give priority to restoring a government-funded outpatient therapy program in Cambridge, Ontario, to provide desperately needed rehabilitation for stroke survivors (and others with similar needs) after discharge from hospital."

As I agree with the contents therein, I sign on the face of it.

IDENTITY THEFT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: This petition has to do with identity theft.

"To the Parliament of Ontario and the Minister of Government Services:

"Whereas identity theft is the fastest-growing crime in North America;

"Whereas confidential and private information is being stolen on a regular basis, affecting literally thousands of people;

"Whereas the cost of this crime exceeds billions of dollars;

"Whereas countless hours are wasted to restore one's good credit rating;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that Bill 75, which passed the second reading unanimously in the Ontario Legislature,... be brought before committee and that the following issues be included for consideration and debate:

"(1) All consumer reports should be provided in a truncated (masked-out) form, protecting our vital private information such as SIN and loan account numbers.

"(2) Should a consumer reporting agency discover that there has been an unlawful disclosure of consumer information, the agency should immediately inform the affected consumer.

"(3) The consumer reporting agency shall only report credit inquiry records resulting from actual applications for credit or increase of credit, except in a report given to the consumer."

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: On a point of order, Speaker: Is there a quorum present?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is there a quorum present?

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): A quorum is now present. The honourable member from Davenport can complete his petition.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This petition is about identity theft. I will not read the petition from the beginning.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Just the last paragraph.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: “(4) The consumer reporting agency shall investigate disputed information within 30 days and correct, supplement or automatically delete any information found unconfirmed, incomplete or inaccurate.”

Certainly, I agree with this petition and I’m proud to sign my name to it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for petitions has ended. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1205 to 1500.

MEMBERS’ STATEMENTS

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I stand in support of CARES, an organization committed to educating our high-risk youth in some very challenging neighbourhoods. The Minister of Education, Kathleen Wynne, was right about one thing today. In her brief entitled Ontario Learns—Strengthening our Adult Education System, Minister Wynne said, “One of the reasons it is important for our provincial government to establish a focus on adult education is to encourage ... solutions to particular local problems and to support the strengths of all deliverers.” I hope that Minister Wynne is able to put partisan politics aside and help the CARES group continue their important work with high-risk youth.

It costs millions of dollars more to taxpayers of Ontario to keep young people on welfare or in prison for the rest of their life than to break the cycle right here and now. I am asking, on behalf of these young people who want to help themselves, that we give them the opportunity to become productive citizens, proactively engaged in their communities, whose children will grow up with a fighting chance.

CARES has approached Minister Wynne once and has also been refused by their MPP, Minister Best. All they want is to keep their doors open. I hope Minister Wynne will finally make that happen.

FORT WILLIAM REDSKINS FOOTBALL TEAM

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to congratulate the Fort William Redskins football team as they celebrate the team’s 50th anniversary of winning the 1958 Dominion Intermediate Football Championship. That year, led by legendary quarterback Albert Davey, halfback Albert Filipovic, punt returner Harvey Littleford and defensive stalwart Sherry Wishart, the team beat St. Francis Xavier

10-0 at snow-covered Thunder Bay’s McKellor Park before 3,500 delirious fans, who tore down both goalposts after the game.

I was pleased to recently address their annual reunion breakfast in Thunder Bay. Our community is proud of the dedication and commitment the team members have shown in preserving and celebrating this rich sport’s heritage. The team members have set a fine example, inspiring players and fans, young and old, by holding these annual reunions for close to 36 years.

This reunion of some 150 surviving Redskins and their family reps coming from all over North America included the presence of their esteemed coach Jack “Baldy” James from Calgary who, with the assistant coach Harold “Snowball” Harri, directed them in the 1940s and 1950s to 10 straight city championships, six western Canadian titles and northwestern Ontario’s first and only Canadian football title. Also present at the reunion were former players of the Fort William Ukes and Port Arthur Mustangs. Several of the Redskins went on to Canadian Football League careers, including Lefty Tait and Vic Marks, Joe Delvecchio and George Grant.

I want to congratulate the Redskins committee members, including former players, who put this event together: Sherry Wishart, Ed Cox and Bob Cameron, Rob McCormack, Morris Stoyka, Bob Loney, Bob Tindall—who’s the head of the quarterback booster club—and Ken “Casey” Campbell.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr. John O’Toole: This government’s review of the provincial-municipal fiscal partnership was supposed to be completed in early 2008—in fact, earlier than that. It was delayed to the spring, then the summer. Most recently, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has claimed an agreement may be reached by the end of the month.

The province and municipalities will soon be preparing their budgets. They’re doing so in a climate of economic uncertainty, to say the very least. More than ever, it is important to have a fiscal agreement between the province and the municipalities. By ignoring deadlines and timetables, this government is proving that it doesn’t take the provincial-municipal fiscal service review very seriously, just as this government doesn’t take seriously the loss of over 200,000 manufacturing jobs or the need for an inquiry into C. difficile or the lack of family doctors or the need to increase the hours of care in long-term-care homes.

A new deadline of October 31—by the way, it’s Halloween—was mentioned recently in the Toronto Star. Municipalities cannot help but wonder if it will be a trick or a treat from the McGuinty government when the new deadline for the provincial-municipal service level review rolls around.

It’s clear: They’ve delayed, dithered and denied, and I can assure you that the people of Ontario are watching

for one more broken promise from a government that has a notorious record for continually breaking its promises.

MENTAL ILLNESS AWARENESS WEEK

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I'm pleased to be able to rise in the House in recognition of Mental Illness Awareness Week in Canada. During this week, the Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health seeks to engage in an education campaign designed to raise public awareness around the reality of mental illness.

On Monday, in my riding of Ottawa Centre, I had the pleasure of attending the first annual Leaders for Mental Health kickoff breakfast hosted by the Royal Ottawa Foundation for Mental Health. Many distinguished leaders in the Ottawa community came together to hear and share personal stories about how mental illness has touched their lives or the lives of someone they know. Daniel Alfredsson, captain of the Ottawa Senators, is championing the youknowwhoiam.com campaign to raise awareness. As we sat together, we learned that one in five individuals will be affected by mental illness at some point in their lifetime.

In my riding of Ottawa Centre, the Royal Ottawa Foundation for Mental Health is working hard to raise funds in support of the Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre so that they can continue to provide high-quality care, both now and in the future.

For far too long, there has been a negative stigma about mental illness. It is my hope that through Mental Illness Awareness Week, we can reduce that negative stigma, while promoting positive best practices and encouraging all community members to come forward to support this worthwhile cause.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Ted Arnott: My constituents in Wellington-Halton Hills are anxious today. They're anxious about losing their retirement savings, their jobs, and possibly even their homes. They expect all governments to respond effectively to this economic crisis, and rightly so.

But the McGuinty Liberal government's performance in question period today was disappointing in the extreme. The finance minister, for example, now says that we need a debate. He should have acknowledged that reality a long time ago. We absolutely needed a debate, but we needed one before, not after, the crisis hit. We needed a debate at the beginning of June, when John Tory and our caucus first called for one.

Based on this government's record, it has no intention of listening to any new economic ideas. They just want to play the blame game. That's why this government's motion is nothing more than a disingenuous and shameful charade.

We look forward to offering our constructive suggestions, as we have in the past. The people of Ontario deserve no less.

We call upon the McGuinty government to change its high-taxing, out-of-control-spending, blame-spreading course.

My constituents, some of whom have already lost their jobs, are expecting better than phony motions and non-answers. It's time the Premier answers for his government's failed economic policies. It's time he changes course. It's time he provides the strong leadership that these days so desperately require.

PAN AMERICAN GAMES

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I'd like to thank Premier McGuinty for his leadership in trying to bring the 2015 Pan American Games to southern Ontario. The benefits both to our economy and even our share of confidence as hosts are significant.

These Pan Am Games will be generating more than \$2 billion of economic activity and should attract over 250,000 tourists and 7,500 athletes from 42 countries.

As you know, the games would be spread across the region from St. Catharines to Toronto. The job creation numbers alone would top over 17,000. It would also help build a better public transit system, more housing and great sports facilities, as has been done in other cities that hosted sports events, such as Turin, Italy, and Barcelona, Spain.

I attended the recent launch for the Pan American Games a week ago with our former Premier David Peterson and our Minister of Health Promotion. I'm convinced that we have the best, most competent people leading the bid, and I hope that all members will support them.

I certainly look forward to having the Pan American Games here in Ontario in 2015.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I rise today to speak to a matter which is costing our province dearly. Ontario is being hard hit by the financial crisis in the US, the high Canadian dollar, and the irresponsible economic management of the federal government. Former CAW president Buzz Hargrove said, "The federal government's lack of attention to the crisis in the manufacturing industry is nothing short of scandalous."

1510

In this time of economic instability, it is imperative that we act to find solutions to the problems we are facing. That is why, as well as the many substantial initiatives that the McGuinty government is already undertaking, we are calling on Ottawa to resolve the unfair way in which we are being treated in the national equalization system. Allowing Ontario to keep more of its own money would give us more tools to help stimulate sectors of the economy that have been hit so hard.

The federal government needs to step up and support programs in Ontario just as it has in other regions when

they were facing economic challenges. The federal government budgets nearly \$1 billion for regional economic development programs but not one cent of it is spent in southern Ontario. A southern Ontario economic development program would provide the additional assistance to sectors of our economy that sorely need it.

ALBERT NAULT

M^{me} France Gélinas: If I mentioned the name Constable Albert Nault, most people wouldn't know who I was talking about, but this is about to change. This Sunday in Sudbury, there will be a very special ceremony to dedicate the bridge on the Highway 17 southeast bypass in the memory of Constable Albert Nault.

Constable Nault was the first Sudbury area police officer to be killed in the line of duty. On December 21, 1931, shortly after midnight, Constable Albert Nault began his beat patrol by conducting property checks off the CNR freight sheds. In 1931, that was a rough area of town. Not long afterwards, Mr. Nault was found shot to death. To this day, his revolver has not been recovered and his murder remains unsolved.

Constable Nault was 35 years old when he died. He left behind his wife and four young children. Mrs. Catherine Kaattari is Constable Nault's granddaughter. She's the one who has spearheaded the effort to honour her grandfather's memory. Constable Nault's children, his family, and indeed all Sudburians, look forward to the Sunday ceremony to honour Constable Nault's place in history and give him the public recognition he so rightly deserves.

It is my pleasure to invite all Sudburians to Tom Davies Square at 11 on Sunday, and I'd like to thank the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services for their support in making this happen.

YOM KIPPUR

Mr. David Zimmer: I'm honoured to rise today on behalf of my Jewish constituents in Willowdale, and indeed across the province, who will begin observing Yom Kippur at sundown this evening.

Yom Kippur, which translates as the Day of Atonement, is the most solemn and important religious Jewish holiday. This holy day is observed with a 25-hour period of fasting and prayer. Yom Kippur follows on the 10th day after Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. According to Jewish tradition, on Rosh Hashanah, God inscribes each person's fate for the upcoming year into a book which is not sealed until Yom Kippur. The 10 days in between are the 10 days of repentance and offer the opportunity for self-reflection, introspection and seeking forgiveness for any wrongdoing.

During this time, individuals greet each other with the Hebrew phrase "Guhmar Chatimah Tovah," which translates as, "May you be inscribed in the book of life." In these last hours of the 10 days of repentance, I would like

to wish all of those who will be observing Yom Kippur, Guhmar Chatimah Tovah, may you all have a peaceful, healthy and fulfilling year.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Reports by committees? Reports by committees? The member for Beaches—East York.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you. I was reflecting on the Jewish New Year.

I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill Pr14, An Act to revive 1068080 Ontario Limited.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO ECONOMY ÉCONOMIE DE L'ONTARIO

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'll begin by reading the motion:

I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario acknowledges our province faces economic challenges created by the high dollar, high international oil prices, the US economic slowdown, international economic turmoil, and increased global manufacturing competition from China and India especially;

That just as Ontario families do when finances get tight at home, the Ontario government should make adjustments as necessary to its finances while protecting our shared priorities, such as health care, education, the environment and public safety;

That the investments made over the last five years in vital public services and Ontarians' key priorities like skills training, infrastructure, education and health care will help Ontario weather the economic challenges in the short term and emerge stronger than ever;

And affirms our strongest possible support for Ontario workers and families and for a healthy, growing economy by continuing to implement the five-point economic plan that includes: investing in the skills of our people, making targeted tax cuts, investing in research and innovation, investing in infrastructure and partnering with businesses, while also expanding trade ties within Can-

ada and internationally and seeking fairness from the federal government for Ontarians.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. McGuinty has moved government notice of motion number 87. Mr. McGuinty?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I am very pleased to participate in the debate about the economy. This is an issue that weighs heavily on the minds of all Ontarians, and members of this House should have the opportunity to express their thoughts, and by that, I mean their concerns, their criticisms and their advice.

I want to make it clear that our government is open to advice. Ontario, indeed the world, finds itself in uncharted economic waters. This challenge will demand the best from all of us, so I look forward to criticism that is constructive and advice that is thoughtful.

For five years now, we have been moving forward with our plan to strengthen our economy. We will not abandon that plan. It's a solid plan, and we've made considerable progress under that plan, but we remain open to building on it, to improving it so it better meets our needs in light of changing circumstances.

In my remarks today, I want to do four things. I want to acknowledge the reality of our economic challenges and the impact these are having on our families and businesses. I want to address the causes of our economic challenges. I want to inform Ontarians of the plan we have in place to help us overcome our challenges and of the progress we are making under that plan. Finally, I want to reassure Ontarians that, just like previous generations in our province who faced and overcame their challenges, we, too, will overcome ours.

I'll begin with a few facts about our economy. During the past five years, the Ontario economy has grown steadily. We have 450,000 more jobs, our unemployment rate has fallen from 7% to 6.3%, and we've made these gains in the face of a high dollar, the high cost of oil and a sluggish US economy. These are all facts, but they're hardly the full story.

Nous avons connu d'importantes pertes d'emplois dans le secteur manufacturier pendant plusieurs années. Il s'agit du même genre de pertes qu'ont connu les États-Unis, le Royaume-Uni et l'Australie.

Depuis 2002, on estime que nous avons perdu 200 000 emplois dans le secteur manufacturier.

1520

The fact is that we've experienced severe job losses in manufacturing over several years now—the kinds of manufacturing job losses seen in the US, the UK and Australia as well. It's been estimated that 200,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost in Ontario since 2002. Our forestry workers have also been hit hard.

We've created many more jobs than we've lost, but that's little consolation to Ontarians who have lost their jobs. A job loss should be seen for what it truly is. It's not a statistic; it's a hardship, it's traumatic and it's especially hard for parents with young families to support. Many Ontarians who are losing a job are getting another one fairly quickly, but some are not and their

pain is real. We are committed, we are determined to do everything we can to help those families. I want to acknowledge the very real worry felt by all our families, even those that have not been touched by job loss.

We find ourselves today in a period of tremendous global economic uncertainty. Ontarians are understandably anxious and concerned for their future. I say to all our families: While we can't control global economic events, there is no better place to find shelter in the storm than right here in Ontario. We have enduring strengths, a shared commitment to look after one another and a sound plan to grow stronger. Of course, I'm talking about our five-point plan to grow the economy.

We knew from the day we first formed the government that beating out the Chinas and the Indias meant we needed to do a better job of turning the remarkable ingenuity of Ontarians, their creative ideas, into brand new products. That's why, three years ago, we created our province's first Ministry of Research and Innovation. By the end of this year we will have invested \$1 billion to support about 1,000 research and commercialization projects which are helping us create the jobs of the future. We're not stopping there. We created a \$205-million venture capital fund to attract investment in new companies with high growth potential, and we're offering a 10-year tax exemption to new businesses that commercialize Canadian ideas, so that our home-grown ideas can be turned into hometown jobs.

We've also long understood the need to invest in our infrastructure. That's why we got right to it three years ago when we launched a five-year, \$30-billion infrastructure plan. Then, in 2006, we launched Move Ontario to help build transit, roads and bridges in every municipality in Ontario. Next, in 2007, we launched Move Ontario 2020, a massive \$17.5-billion public transit plan for the GTA and Hamilton. Then, just this year, we provided \$1.1 billion directly to municipalities for their infrastructure needs, like roads, bridges and transit. It was because of our decisive action on infrastructure years ago that I can report that today there are 21 major construction projects under way through Infrastructure Ontario, employing thousands and thousands of construction workers, and there are another 10 projects in the pipeline—all this because we understood and we moved quickly.

Something else our government understood from the beginning: It takes the best workers in the world to get the best jobs in the world. So, again two years ago, we launched our Reaching Higher plan, a plan to dramatically increase funding by \$6.2 billion in post-secondary education. Thanks to that investment, there are now 100,000 more young Ontarians in colleges and universities, and 50,000 more learning a trade. Because of new funding in our high schools, over 22,000 more kids have graduated from high school instead of dropping out—but we didn't stop there. Just this year, we launched Second Career to help laid-off workers get the higher skills they need for their next career.

I recently read a story about a laid-off auto worker from Bowmanville, Jeff Statham. He's 38 and has two

small kids at home, but because of Second Career, Jeff has the support he needs to train for the job he has always wanted. He wanted to be a police officer. We're helping him to get there.

Une solide économie a besoin d'une solide main-d'œuvre qui travaille pour de solides entreprises. Nous comprenons l'effet qu'ont les impôts sur nos entreprises et nous savions qu'en allégeant ce fardeau, cela les aiderait à connaître le succès et à créer plus d'emplois.

A strong economy needs a strong workforce working for strong businesses. We understood the impact of tax on our businesses, and we knew that lightening the load would help them succeed and create even more jobs. That's why we've already cut business taxes by \$1.5 billion. Fully phased in, our tax cuts will save our businesses nearly \$3 billion annually. Because of a very early agreement I reached with Prime Minister Martin, our new harmonized corporate tax collection system will save Ontario businesses a lot of money starting next year, up to \$100 million annually in compliance costs and another \$90 million in corporate income taxes.

This brings me to the last point in our economic plan. Ontarians have always understood we're at our best when we work together, so five years ago we made it clear we were ready to work with Ontario businesses to partner with those that wanted to grow by investing in their workers or in new technologies. Since then, we've invested \$500 million in the auto sector to generate \$7.5 billion in new investment and thousands of jobs. We're proud of our auto workers, who have made Ontario the number one auto producer in North America. Yes, we've lost jobs, but we'll keep fighting for more. The auto sector has a bright, green future in Ontario, and we are eager to help build that future.

We also see a bright future for a stronger manufacturing sector generally. That's why, three years ago, we created our advanced manufacturing investment strategy. So far, 18 projects have generated \$880 million in investment and created or retained 4,000 jobs. Again, we didn't stop there. Earlier this year, we launched our Next Generation of Jobs Fund, a \$1.15-billion fund to help new businesses create the jobs of the future.

Our support for the forest sector has created or secured nearly 5,000 jobs and generated \$368 million in new private sector investments since 2005. We increased the rural economic development fund by \$30 million over four years to support jobs and economic growth in rural Ontario.

I can tell you that our partnerships with business are paying off for our workers and their families. Over two years ago, I visited Diamond Aircraft in London to celebrate our government's partnership with that business, a partnership that saw us invest \$10 million in that company's expansion. Two years ago, Diamond Aircraft had 340 employees; today, they have 600. That's progress.

Back in July, I visited a company in Vaughan called 6N Silicon. They build solar panels. We are investing nearly \$8 million in 6N Silicon, and they're opening a new manufacturing plant, creating 84 new jobs. That's progress.

In Alliston just last month, Honda officially opened a new engine plant. We were proud to invest \$15 million to kick-start that plant, a plant that's going to employ 340 people. That's progress too.

But it's important that we acknowledge that it's not enough, not as long as some families are hurting. We're going to keep working hard until all our workers and their families can find opportunity in this changing economy.

Finding that opportunity means looking beyond the US when it comes to trade. That's why, during the past five years, we've opened up seven new international trade offices. It's why we now have a minister, Sandra Pupatello, exclusively focused on enhancing our international trade ties. It's why Minister Pupatello is today leading Ontario's first-ever trade mission to the United Arab Emirates. And it's why, later this month, I will return to China with people representing Ontario's environmental technology businesses.

Not only have we moved aggressively to exploit opportunities outside of Canada; we've also moved just as aggressively to obtain fairness for Ontarians in Canada. We want a full partner in Ottawa, a fair partner in Ottawa. This Legislature has been united in our demand for fairness, and for good reason. It's now well documented: Ontario taxpayers are sending over \$20 billion every year through Ottawa to other provinces to cut their taxes and invest in their programs.

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Si Ottawa nous traitait équitablement, et si nous pouvions conserver plus de nos impôts ici en Ontario, nous pourrions progresser bien plus avec notre plan en cinq volets visant à renforcer notre économie. En particulier, nous pourrions accorder un meilleur soutien aux Ontariennes et Ontariens qui perdent leur emploi, nous pourrions accroître l'infrastructure permettant de créer des emplois, et nous pourrions fournir plus d'aide au secteur manufacturier qui crée des emplois.

If we were treated fairly by Ottawa, if we could keep more of our taxpayer dollars in Ontario, we would move faster and further with our five-point plan to strengthen this economy. In particular, we could better support Ontarians who are losing their jobs, we could build more infrastructure to create jobs and we could provide more assistance to manufacturers who provide jobs. You see, as proud Canadians, Ontarians want more than anything else to build a stronger Ontario for a stronger Canada. Giving us fairness will give us the tools we need to get that job done.

The events of recent days, with wildly fluctuating stock markets, failing US banks and a spreading global financial crisis, have Ontarians very concerned. Some, especially our seniors, are very worried about losses to their retirement savings. The truth is that none of us knows exactly how global economic events will unfold. We do know that Ontario will be affected; we don't know exactly how. But just as we need to be honest about the global economic challenge before us today, so should we be honest about something else, and that is our

truly remarkable proven ability as Ontarians to overcome whatever challenges come our way.

Every generation of Ontarians has faced and overcome challenges unique to its time. The first Ontarians—our First Nations—and then our settlers who followed centuries ago fought the harsh elements and carved out an existence for themselves here, and we won. In the early days before we were even a province of Canada, we faced invasion and rebellion, and we won. Some of our generations faced world war and fought for our freedom, and we won. Ontarians came together to beat back the economic despair of the Great Depression, and we won. We overcame the OPEC crisis in the 1970s and economic slowdowns in the early 1980s and 1990s, and we won. Through it all, Ontarians have remained steadfast and strong and resilient. We have always come back stronger, and this time will be no different.

Our commitment to Ontarians is this: While your government can't do everything, we will do everything we can to help. We will keep moving forward with our plan to grow this economy. We will keep investing in innovation, in the skills and education of our workers, in infrastructure, in lower business taxes and in partnerships with business. We will keep fighting for fairness from Ottawa. We will keep seeking new economic opportunities around the world. And if changing circumstances demand it, we will change our plan to make Ontario stronger. Above all, I want to ensure the people of Ontario that we are in your corner. We are going to get through this together, and we're going to look after one another. We will do what Ontarians have always done: We will overcome our challenges, and we will build a better, stronger, more caring Ontario for all our children.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: This just in from the TSX: I'm sure it's gone up by 200 points.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): That's not a point of order. Further debate?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: At the outset, I want to take a few minutes—and I think it's appropriate—to talk about the process and how we arrived where we are today, in terms of the motion that is before the House. I think it's appropriate, especially for Liberal backbenchers, and especially the newer members of the Legislature, to understand what happened here.

We heard the Premier in his address: "We're at our best when we work together." Fine words, but let's take a look at the process used to bring this motion before the Legislature today: no consultation, no discussion, no effort to reach out to the opposition parties to deal with this matter or the wording of the motion. Traditionally—historically—when we've looked toward all parties to support a message that came out of this Legislature, we've worked together on the wording. It may have taken a day or two, or even three, to work it out, to finesse it so that we could have comfort levels within all three parties represented in this Legislature. Regrettably,

that didn't happen. In this instance, this motion was sprung on the opposition at the end of the business day yesterday.

We have House leaders in this place who, again, traditionally meet weekly to talk about the business of the House, negotiate the schedule for debate and, sometimes, negotiate ways in which we can arrive at a consensus on a range of issues going forward. Again, that did not happen.

I want to compliment at least two members of the Progressive Conservative staff, Julie Kwiecinski and Glen Stone, who worked late last night to ensure that the members of the official opposition were as well informed as we could be going forward with what the Premier and his colleagues have described as an emergency debate.

We're very disappointed in the process, and we're very disappointed in the approach. The Premier has used fine words here today, and we would have trouble disagreeing with many of them. But the reality behind those fine words is very disappointing: certainly, not one iota of effort to make it, in his words, "our best when we work together." There's no question that these are challenging times, and we should find ways to put partisanship aside.

We're having a great deal of trouble not only with the way this matter has been handled, in terms of excluding the opposition parties from the process, but also with the wording of the motion itself. There seems to be a real effort here to pat themselves on the back with respect to policies that now have been in place for about five years. We have to, regrettably again, question the sincerity. Actions belie words in this instance, and there's too strong an element of self-serving contained within the wording of the motion.

We also have concerns about motivation, in terms of laying groundwork for changes that may be planned by the government. We specifically raised two of those concerns in question period today, related to the potential for deficits or increased taxes, without getting any meaningful response from the Premier or his Minister of Finance.

When we talk about sincerity—and I want to talk about the past two weeks since the House has been back—obviously, the economy is the issue worldwide, not just in Ontario or North America. We have pressed the Premier and his colleagues on not just our concerns, but the concerns of families, seniors and communities right across this province.

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We've asked specific questions about the state of the economy, questions like, "How much of the \$800-million reserve fund has been used?" Another question: "What's the update on your commitment to find \$1 billion in savings and efficiencies, a commitment made in the March budget in order to achieve a balanced budget?" Seven months after the start of the fiscal year, we felt it was a reasonable request for people—not just the opposition, but the people of this province—to know where we stand with respect to achieving that goal. Con-

sistently, the minister and the Premier would say, "Wait until October 22. You'll find out on October 22, when we give you an economic statement."

Today he's asking us to discuss the economy without knowing the state of the province's books. I would ask any fair-minded person sitting in this chamber or viewing the proceedings to tell us how you get where you want to go if you don't know where you're starting. I think that's a legitimate question. You can't find a solution if you don't know what the problems are. That's the position the Premier and his colleagues have placed us all in.

For the past two years, this government has ignored warnings from both opposition parties and renowned economists, including their own economic advisers, and they have continued on their merry taxing-and-spending way.

Only a few weeks ago, with the economic storm clouds circling, they spent up to \$2.7 million of taxpayers' money on a party for themselves and their friends in Windsor. When you look at that sort of thing, it's a relatively small example, I suppose, in the context of the total budget, but it's the sort of thing that people who are out of work or threatened with losing their jobs, communities, should be deeply offended by. Struggling families, communities, would, I suspect, be deeply offended if they only knew about it, and regrettably, partly because of the House rules that have been changed by this government and the declining coverage of this place, not too many Ontarians are aware of that.

The more I think about this motion that's before us, the more I believe it's a cynical, shameful stunt—regrettably so; I don't come to that conclusion easily—and perhaps giving false hope to families and communities who are genuinely concerned about their future. As I said earlier, I also believe that the other underlying motive behind this motion is to lay the groundwork for tax increases and/or deficits or both.

As we discuss and debate the current economic situation, from the Progressive Conservative perspective, I want to make one thing very clear: There is still every reason to believe in Ontario, to have hope for a bright future. The location of this province hasn't changed; it's a strategic location, and whatever people may be saying today about our proximity to the United States market, it will continue to be a blessing for us and for generations to come. The natural resources of this province are still here. We can and we must find ways to conserve them and to seek benefit from them, at the same time helping us build a stronger Ontario. Our farmers are still the best in the world, capable of growing the highest-quality food. Our people are still among the smartest, the hardest-working people in all the world.

In this province, as the Premier referenced, we have a proud heritage of leadership: economic leadership; leadership on a range of social policies, including health care and education; and, I should add, leadership in nation-building. It has come from a combination of hard work and smarts and from strong, steady leadership that put growth, leadership and prosperity at the core of the mandate received from voters.

In one sense, today's debate is welcome, although very late. I think most of us recognized, at least on this side, the warning signs of impending trouble. We saw them growing around us, and we've been asking the government to give people a chance to air their views. Our party leader, Mr. Tory, suggested earlier this year that we work together—political parties, government, business, labour and others—suggested that we sit down for a summit. He wasn't the only one; I believe OPSEU also suggested this: to sit down to see if we could agree on elements of a problem that was surely arising months ago when he made that suggestion. That's fine if we could agree on at least some of the solutions. The McGuinty government said no.

We've been asking for an economic and financial update for months and if we'd had that summit, and an update in the spring, we might have put some measures in place by now that would actually be helping to save jobs today or to attract some new investment. Again, no update, no information, no action taken by the McGuinty government. Even with an update—now, we have an update still weeks away. We have a debate today. If it was a straightforward debate, the result of consultation and agreement between the parties, it would demonstrate not only goodwill but perhaps illustrate a different approach by the McGuinty government, one that would show recognition that we are indeed in very different times.

If the resolution put forward was the result of some discussion and negotiations involving all members of the provincial Parliament, it might show a sense on the part of Mr. McGuinty and the folks in his office that times of crisis require all hands on deck. Maybe it would show that he realizes, in times of crisis, that you want to reach out to all MPPs, MPPs from all parties, to ask for their ideas and ask for their help, and I think that's what people expect.

That's not what this is about, regrettably. What we got was more public relations: a resolution surely designed to score political points for the McGuinty Liberals while people are continuing to lose their jobs, fearing they are losing their homes and their pensions and are looking for leadership, not political games. This is a resolution designed to give the government a blank cheque, perhaps to raise taxes again and perhaps run a deficit. It's a resolution to promote the myth that Ontario really can't do anything on its own to keep jobs, to attract jobs, to help people who are struggling; the myth that, somehow, Mr. McGuinty and his ministers are just innocent bystanders who've been victimized by stormy seas around us. We heard more of that blame game here earlier.

And that's the central problem. Mr. McGuinty, I think, really believes that Ontario got to the top of the mountain by accident, that we are entitled to stay there by right. He closes his eyes to the fact that we've been sliding down that mountain for some time—and with his policies speeding up that decline, not stopping it in its tracks. He's allowed this province to slide down, to decline in

far too many areas where we used to be leaders. I'll discuss some of those in a moment. He's assumed that some kind of "Let's hope for the best" mantra, repeated often enough, will be a substitute for action and real leadership.

Perhaps even worse than any of that is the fact that Mr. McGuinty and his government seem prepared to just settle for an Ontario that is declining—it is not the leader in Canada anymore—where a barely passing grade is just accepted as being good enough. Well, I can tell you that our party, the Progressive Conservative caucus and the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, never have accepted and never will accept an Ontario that strives for nothing more than a passing grade. We cannot and we will not accept an Ontario that is anything less than it can be: the economic leader, the leader in delivering top-quality social programs, a nation builder like no other.

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Unlike the Premier, we Progressive Conservatives understand that if you believe in Ontario being all it can be and must be, there goes with that an important set of responsibilities: the responsibility to take steps yourself to do whatever you can to build a strong and dynamic economy. Without it, we simply can't offer opportunity. We simply won't have the money to pay for the crucially important social programs.

It's fine to demand things from others, whether it's the federal government or individual citizens, and it's fine to point to external circumstances which make our challenges even more daunting. We all recognize that. But in the end, you don't have any credibility talking about those things, you're not doing what the people sent you here to do, if you do not at the same time accept some responsibility for yourself, if you don't actually do anything and everything you can to make the situation better. And you don't have any credibility if you're seen to be playing cynical political games while a crisis is sweeping across the province. People losing their jobs, people worried about losing their pensions or their homes, have the right to expect more than to see the Premier playing political games.

As our leader, Mr. Tory, said earlier today, Mr. McGuinty should be trying to score investment and jobs for Ontario, not scoring political points for himself and his party. It's those kinds of games that have people so turned off with all politicians.

I will be tabling an amendment at the end of my remarks which I would like to hope—

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller:—very rude. Rude.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: He is talking about the government, Speaker, just to make that clear.

I'm going to be proposing an amendment at the end of these remarks which I would like to hope members opposite can support, because it lays out not self-congratulatory rhetoric but some ideas on how we can actually encourage job creation and investment, show some government restraint and create more training opportunities. That's just to cite a few examples.

The Liberal government should be very clear at the outset about the motion in the form it is proposed. The notion that we would support a resolution which endorses the big-taxing, big-spending, job-crushing policies of this government was cynical—ridiculous from the outset. It won't happen because we believe those policies have contributed to the mess we're in today. That's why we will try to amend it, knowing that Mr. McGuinty should have taken this seriously and played it straight from the outset.

I think it would be helpful to take a few minutes to review just where Ontario stands today and put some facts on the record on how far we've fallen—a quick look at some of the policies that the government has put in place that have helped us to get where we are today—and then, again, review some of the steps that we believe could and should be taken to reverse the decline and start the process of getting Ontario back on top. We know the province is falling behind. The fiscal agenda of the government is one that has been eliminating our competitive advantage over the past five years, driving business investment and jobs into neighbouring jurisdictions—we're seeing that on an almost daily basis—jurisdictions that offer lower tax rates and a more attractive business environment. Other provinces across this great country are seeking to become more competitive. They are lightening their tax burden, providing economic stimulus to create jobs, but Ontario at the same time is falling further and further behind.

This year, the TD Bank reported that the province is on track to becoming a have-not province—not a proud moment in our history. On the unemployment front, for the first time in 30 years Ontario's unemployment rate exceeded the national average, rising to 6.5% in December 2007. Our unemployment rate remains above the national average and is being forecast, without the latest meltdown, by all the major banks to stay that way through 2009. On the housing starts, I'm not sure I have the most up-to-date figures here because I know there were new stats out this week, but the ones we do have, housing starts declined almost 28% in July to 59,000 units; in 2007, we were down 7.2% in terms of housing starts.

International merchandise exports: Over the first six months of this year, the value of those exports is down almost 13%. Manufacturing sales, over the first six months of this year, are down 7.5% from the previous year.

We heard the Premier in his comments referencing his pride in job creation. I think we need a little clarification on those statistics that the Premier, his ministers and his backbenchers frequently refer to.

We have gained a total of 449,600 new jobs since October 2003. Over half those new jobs—we want to put this on the record—236,300 jobs, are public sector jobs, versus a mere 154,300 in the private sector. That represents a 22% increase in public sector jobs versus a mere 4% in the private sector. Since October 2003, Ontario created more public sector jobs than all other

provinces combined. Think about that. That's clearly unsustainable as we go forward.

Let's talk about the job situation. We know what has happened in the forestry, fishing, mining and oil and gas sectors—significant job losses. In manufacturing, we've lost 213,000, and I hear different numbers from our friends to the left that are even higher than this, but from the stats we have, 213,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost in this province since 2004—many, many communities impacted by this. We heard of Goderich just a week or so ago. Smiths Falls neighbours my riding, and my friend Mr. Hillier, who's not here today—really impacting Smiths Falls. In Gananoque in my riding, they've lost three manufacturing operations in the last two years. You can go across the province looking especially at these smaller communities, seeing the jobs disappear, their tax base becoming dramatically eroded.

There's another one we should comment on in terms of the record of this government, and they can't escape it. It has to be drawn to the public's attention in terms of their responsibility for the situation we're in today. It's not completely their responsibility; we will agree that's the case. But they've tried to avoid any degree of responsibility, and we have a responsibility on this side of the House, as Her Majesty's loyal opposition, to make sure the public, the taxpayers of this province, the people who are losing their jobs, the people who are worried about their futures, the communities impacted, are made aware of what this government has done over its past five years and what they're failing to do as we go forward.

Runaway spending: The fiscal policy approach of this government appears to be focused largely on increasing government revenues in order to fund government spending. If you take a look at the current economic outlook, that's a policy that is increasingly risky and economically harmful.

The Premier, Mr. McGuinty—his government has increased total spending by \$27 billion or 40%, to \$96 billion today from \$69 billion when it took office. Total program spending has increased by nearly 50%, up \$28 billion.

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If you want to put this in some perspective, let's take a look at historical spending. Bob Rae, that renowned Liberal, when he was Premier of this province, only managed to increase total spending by 21% in five years versus 50% by this government. The only one that even comes close is a gentleman by the name of David Peterson. I happened to be around in those days, and the spending of that government wasn't at the same clip as this. They increased spending by 45%; we're now looking at 50%. They did 45%, and I recall very vividly the governor of the Bank of Canada expressing serious concern about the spending of Mr. Peterson's government, which was having an impact on driving up inflation in Canada; that's how bad the spending was under Mr. Peterson, and we know where that led us. We know that led this province into a recession, exacerbated by decisions made by their successors in the NDP govern-

ment. They led us down that path, and clearly they learned no lessons whatsoever from the Peterson era, the position it placed this province in and the years it took us to get out of the fiscal bad shape they placed us in.

Instead of using unprecedented revenue to provide tax relief or pay down the debt, this government has used money to fuel—we've seen it—year-end spending sprees. We all remember—what was that called?

Interjections.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Slushgate. That's the word I was thinking of, the slush fund at the end of the year, with no controls, no applications, no oversight, simply flushing money out the door to friends and allies. That's the Liberal approach to safeguarding taxpayers' dollars.

As this government continues to mortgage our future against future taxes, total debt in Ontario is continuing to climb. It's up to \$168 billion, or \$13,125 for every man, woman and child in Ontario—not something to be proud of. Interest on the debt now eats up over \$9 billion every year. That's just under \$25 million a day in debt interest repayment.

Uncompetitive taxes are another one we should talk about. I have a quote from one of the close economic advisers—I could speak to his comments all day, really, but I'm only going to use one of his comments—Dr. Roger Martin, dean of the Rotman School of Management, whose advice, for the most part, has essentially been ignored by this government. I'm quoting Dr. Martin here: "In Ontario we still have one of the highest marginal tax burdens on business investment in the world."

The reality is that Ontario imposes the highest effective tax rate on capital in Canada. Ontario's effective tax rate on capital is higher than the worldwide average and higher than rates in the United States, and the variation of tax burdens on business activities is increasing, not decreasing. What that results in is increased interference with boardroom decisions that are going to be taken with respect to these tax burdens. What happens, as the Minister of Finance should know, is that decisions are taken that steer resources to the most profitable business opportunities, and we're seeing that on a daily—

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Like Toyota coming to Ontario?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Certainly you can point to some modest examples.

Mr. Paul Miller: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: We sat and showed courtesy and listened to the Premier, and now Mr. Runciman is trying to speak and they're talking and they're mocking him. Let's have a little decorum—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, I listened very carefully. There are some interjections from time to time, even from you. So I think that—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'll be the judge of what—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Just take your seat, please.

Mr. Paul Miller: Is that partisan?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I think we all should recognize that we need decorum in here. Thank you.

Member for Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I know that these are difficult messages for the Liberal members to hear, especially their cabinet ministers who have been making these decisions over the past few years. If there is an advantage to this debate, we will be able to put some proposals on the table—but at the same time, hopefully, more and more people will become aware of the failings of this government, which they have been unwilling to address and correct, and will be aware of the fact that there are answers; there are initiatives that we can undertake at the provincial level which, if not completely addressing all of challenges we face, can moderate the impacts on the good people of the province of Ontario.

I was talking about uncompetitive taxes, and that is an especially sensitive point with the government, but we have their own advisers telling them this—and not just Roger Martin. We just recently saw Don Drummond from TD Economics referencing this issue as well. I know that Mr. Drummond is not only a close adviser; I believe he helped initially when this government came into office in preparation of at least their first budget. I'm not sure if they're just cheek by jowl on going forward, but I give Mr. Drummond full marks for publicly telling us just what the challenges are with respect to taxation levels in this province. I talked about the variation of tax burden and the impact that that's having on boardroom decisions.

Another point on this: While the marginal tax burden on the cost of doing business in Canada has declined, Ontario has maintained the highest effective tax burden on costs. The minister's shaking his head over there, but this I believe is from the C.D. Howe Institute. If he wants to debate the C.D. Howe Institute, I'd love to be sitting in on that debate. Ontario also maintains the highest tax burden on investment in Canada—the highest tax burden on investment in Canada.

One more before we leave this area of uncompetitive taxes: We also impose relatively high taxes on service companies, including growth-enhancing, knowledge-based industries where the earnings are rising faster than the rest of the economy. For example, Ontario's marginal effective tax rate on capital is a punishing 46.2% on communications and 42.4% on business services.

We heard the Premier talk about his five-point economic plan. He talked about investing in skills and knowledge. We know that the much-vaunted Second Career strategy, supposed to help 20,000 unemployed workers—even the goal was less than 10% of those who'd lost their jobs since 2005; even that modest goal is not being achieved. Despite them blowing their horns on this one, the last numbers we heard, 1,100 people had

applied and about 600 people were actually participating in this program—600 people out of well over 200,000 people who have lost their jobs in this province. It's nothing to boast about.

Another issue that they talk about in their five-point plan is expanding the number of Ontario apprentices. They've said that their goal is to increase new apprentice registration from 110,000 by 32,000 annually—yet they have failed to take action to address the problem of apprenticeship ratios which effectively prohibit businesses from hiring apprentices. We've raised this in the House on a continual basis. All of us, especially in the smaller, less-populated ridings, have small business-people coming up to us and saying, "We've got young people who want to get into the electrical trades. We can't do it because of this ratio," where the Liberal government says you have to have three tradesmen for one apprentice. In effect, you've got to have three teachers with one student. That's what this government is saying. We have these thousands of young people wanting to get into trades when there's a real need for them in this province, and this government won't allow them to do it.

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We ask this week after week. We've been asking it for months. "Let's address this real challenge, real need," and we get nothing but bafflegab from the minister responsible, because on this side of the House we know what is behind all of this. It's a sweetheart deal with the unions; nothing more, nothing less. This is payback for Working Families, that group of unions called Working Families that spent millions of dollars to re-elect a Liberal government and elected them back in 1993 too.

That's the reality behind this, and it's truly, truly shameful when we have young people out there looking for jobs, wanting to learn a trade, and this government, because of a backroom deal with unions, won't let them learn that trade. That's the reality. It's truly shameful.

Hon. George Smitherman: You didn't even have any apprenticeship opportunities.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: We had lots of jobs; no pressure. You're losing hundreds of thousands of jobs.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Stop the clock. We just had a little session a bit ago about decorum, and I'd like to remind all members of that.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Another part of the vaunted five-point economic plan that they keep falling back on is investing in infrastructure. The last budget actually contained relatively little infrastructure investment for this year. They allocated \$60 billion for a new infrastructure plan over 10 years, to commence only once ReNew Ontario is complete in 2010. There is still no real plan for long-term stable funding for municipal infrastructure. They continue to pick and choose municipal winners and losers through a revolving-door process. We're entering that again shortly, I gather. That's the reality in terms of that component of their five-point plan.

Lowering business costs: That's a bit of a laugher. The McGuinty government has actually increased the cost of

doing business in Ontario. That's the reality. Look at the job-killing capital tax. We would not have a capital tax today had the Liberal government not postponed the 2003 Progressive Conservative budget plan to fully eliminate it along the schedule of the federal government. That's the reality.

Corporate income taxes: The Fiscal Responsibility Act, which you brought in, and the minister will remember this, eliminated all of the corporate tax measures announced in the Progressive Conservative budget. Both the corporate income tax and the manufacturing process income tax rates were raised back to 2001 levels: 14% and 12% respectively. Under our plan, corporate taxes would have continued to decline to 8% for general corporations and manufacturing and processing businesses by 2006. That act also froze the small business income tax rate at 5.5% and cancelled the scheduled rate reductions that were in the previous government's budget.

The McGuinty government has significantly increased the cost of doing business in Ontario. Faster-growing provinces, and I referenced this earlier, of all political stripes are moving in just the opposite direction: British Columbia; even Saskatchewan's former NDP government reduced corporate income tax rates; Alberta, which is not terribly surprising; and Manitoba's NDP government. This government has been going in the opposite direction.

Red tape: The reality again is, this government has done nothing to reduce the regulatory burden on business, which is costing the economy an estimated \$5 billion annually. According to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, 2,212 Ontario businesses who responded—that's 66%—said that the overall burden of provincial regulation has increased during the past three years. Again, that's another message this government doesn't like to hear, but that's the reality out on the ground, out in the communities, out in the business world.

Number four, on strengthening the environment for innovation: According to the C.D. Howe Institute, their new 10-year corporate income tax holiday for commercialized intellectual property is ill-designed. They say it doesn't work and it has proved to be totally ineffective in jurisdictions where it has been tried. The government's biopharmaceutical investment program, which is a component of their Next Generation of Jobs Fund, doesn't include jobs created as an eligibility requirement for program funding.

Mr. Frank Klees: That's incredible.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Yes, it is incredible. How can the government pick and choose the areas where Ontario can be globally competitive, when they don't even tie in jobs created as an eligibility requirement and they have narrowed their focus in terms of who could qualify for assistance under the program?

Mr. Frank Klees: There's no plan.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: There really is no plan.

I should also mention, as I referenced the Next Generation of Jobs Fund, which, again, was one of these

launches with all the horns blaring—it was launched on March 3 of this year with a 45-day turnaround guarantee. Two hundred days ago, they made that 45-day guarantee. Since then, we have only heard of one announcement, 200 days later. Therefore, I think we have to conclude that either the program is grossly underfunded, or the government is rejecting applications, or, as I've seen with the eastern Ontario development fund, the bureaucracy put in place is just horrific and is turning people away.

The Minister of Finance is here, and I know he has talked about his economic statement coming up on October 22. Certainly, we think he should have fast-tracked that statement as best he could, in terms of having the figures to do so, because of the situation we're facing. I want to indicate to him that we're counting on him to open the books, to allow taxpayers to see what the true situation is. We recognize, and you've acknowledged in your comments last week, that the province is in serious financial trouble. You hinted that we may run a deficit. Obviously, it's difficult to, as I said earlier, plan a path forward without knowing what your starting point is. Minister of Finance, we want to suggest that your statement must provide a full accounting to Ontarians. Empty assurances that the plan is working simply won't cut it anymore. Your statement must include complete details on revenues, reserve funds, in-year savings, unspent resources and so on. Most importantly, it must include plans to save and attract jobs and to help those who've already lost theirs.

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I'll put on the record, and this is really a starting point, Minister, some suggestions on what the province could be doing right now on jobs and the economy, knowing that we're facing zero economic growth this year and job losses are mounting. We also recognize that you are not helpless. There are six steps, which I'll go over very briefly, that you could be taking right now that would help stop the bleeding of jobs, provide hope and opportunity today, and help put Ontario back on top for the future.

(1) Provide the economic update as quickly as possible. Ontarians should not have to wait until November to find out what, if anything, the government plans to do to help and protect them.

(2) Open up the books with a complete financial statement. Taxpayers deserve to know how far off plan government finances have gone and if anything is left in the reserve fund.

(3) Help people who have lost jobs and those at risk of doing so. Use the reserve fund and savings from public sector restraint to provide tax relief for families and businesses, and more training or retraining for those who need to find a new career.

(4) Put out the welcome mat for investment. Simplify and reduce the regulatory burden without jeopardizing the public interest and provide a genuine customer service approach to investors.

(5) Show some public sector restraint. Do what sensible families do in tough times—discipline your

spending and look for value for money. In particular, put reasonable restraint on public sector hiring and wage increases, especially at the top of the scale."

This is clearly one where the government should have no trouble, but we saw today that they're clearly not, at the moment, anyway, prepared to do this, with some of the statements we heard from the members and the Premier as well:

(6) Work with other governments, not point fingers. People are looking for leadership, not excuses or political battles. In tough times, they need to know that someone is at the wheel, trying to avoid the icebergs on their behalf.

That wraps up my comments. I do have a motion, but I want to indicate that there is a great deal of enthusiasm amongst the Progressive Conservative caucus members to speak to this motion because they're hearing from their constituents on a daily basis. They know the concerns out there in the communities and within families about where this province is going and what the future holds for them, their kids and grandkids. We're concerned that this government for the past number of years has had the blinders on and has been unwilling at all to look at measures it could be taking and should be taking to at least soften the blow on this province and ensure that we can go forward in the future with great promise. So our folks are fired up about this. We're very concerned about the attitude of the government, the fact that they brought in a motion without consulting us—a partisan motion, not a motion encouraging all parties to participate in the sense of support, a very disappointing initiative in very challenging times by a government that purports to speak for all of the people, very disappointing indeed. I will close off by moving an amendment.

I move that the government motion be amended as follows: striking out all of the text after "that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario acknowledges" and replacing it with the following:

"That, instead of seeking legislative approval to run a deficit and/or raise taxes, the government of Ontario take real action to address the province's economic crisis;

"That the taxpayers of Ontario deserve an immediate and comprehensive financial statement that fully opens up the public books, revealing the true state of everything from government revenues to reserve funds, what savings the government has found and how it plans to handle any financial shortfalls;

"That people who have lost their jobs or are worried about their future deserve a comprehensive and realistic economic action plan designed to save existing jobs, attract new jobs and investment and help the unemployed find new work here in Ontario;

"That businesses struggling to stay afloat deserve competitive taxes, less red tape, sensible apprenticeship ratios and a genuine customer service approach that welcomes new investment;

"That families working to make ends meet deserve to see their government do what they're doing in rough times, discipline their spending, look for value for

money, and that this should be reflected in sensible public sector restraint on hiring and wage increases, especially at the top;

"That all Ontarians deserve to see their government provide leadership in this crisis, partnership with other levels of government and accountability for the areas where it has control; and

"That putting partisan politics aside, all parties in the Ontario Legislature should work cooperatively to implement these steps and others that will protect people's jobs and investments, restore Ontario's competitiveness and put our province back on the path to prosperity."

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Runciman has moved an amendment to the motion. Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: It has been my privilege over the last hour and a half to listen to two speeches, two ideas on the economic vitality or economic life of the province of Ontario. I'd like to begin by talking about the resolution that was initially put before us and perhaps toward the end I can deal with the amendment.

The resolution that was initially put before us starts out, as all resolutions do, by setting up a purport, a paragraph from which the rest flows, and if the purport, or the initial paragraph, tends to be wrong, I would suggest to you that the balance tends to be wrong as well.

I always read that first paragraph, although most people skip right to the "Be it resolved" at the end, and I always read it to see whether or not the government has its facts right when we start out and when we start to look at where they want to go on the economy. So the first thing I looked at was the challenges that are here in Ontario, and they cite our high dollar. I realize that the dollar is higher than it was three or four years ago. We all acknowledge that the dollar was artificially low and was trading in the 65- and then up to the 75-cent range for a long, long time. Then the dollar took off. The dollar took off to heights we had not seen since the Diefenbaker years, since the dollar was worth \$1.05 and made that lofty height about a year ago. The dollar was trading at US\$1.05 and seemed to be invincible and strong.

But since that time the dollar has declined some 14%. When we talk about the high dollar—and this motion was written and put on my desk yesterday—the dollar yesterday was trading at a little over 90 cents. When I came here this afternoon, just before I came into this chamber at 3 o' clock, I turned on the financial channel and looked at the figures that were going back and forth, and the Canadian dollar was trading at 89 cents. I don't know how many people are relying on the fact of the high dollar for causing or continuing to cause us grief, and I would acknowledge it caused us grief at \$1.05. I would acknowledge that it caused us grief when it was trading around parity for all those many months, but I have to question the government that is putting its whole financial picture here on a high Canadian dollar which, as I speak, is trading below 90 cents.

So let's get realistic. When we talked to the Premier months ago and he was not acknowledging all of the

economic crisis in the United States—he didn't see Fannie Mae, he didn't see Freddie Mac, he didn't see the mortgage crisis, he didn't see the job losses, he didn't see the trading patterns; he didn't see all of those as we stood up day after day to ask those questions—he always referred to the high dollar. Well, today, when he put his own motion forward, he referred to a high dollar at 89 cents, and if that's where the Liberals are coming from on this, I don't understand.

So I went on to look at the second real cause of concern that the Premier has. He says that it's the high internal oil prices. I drive a car, as most of the people in this room do and most Ontarians do, and even those who don't drive cars use transit and transportation, and they know the effect of high oil prices and how those high oil prices have caused inflationary problems and financial problems to households and to individuals. We know full well that when we were raising all the financial crisis that has ensued over the last years in this House, all of the turmoil in the United States—the markets, the declines in jobs, the mortgage crisis, Bear Stearns and everything else—the Premier and the finance minister kept talking about the high price of oil. Yes, it was high. It was trading at \$140 a barrel for weeks on end and continued to be in the stratosphere for a long time. But on the day that this motion is tabled before the House, on the day it's tabled before the House, oil declined to \$90 a barrel. That's way less than it was last year. In fact, this is the lowest we've seen it for months, if not years: \$90 a barrel. Just before I walked in here to listen to the Premier's speech, in which he refers to the high cost of oil, it was trading at \$88 a barrel. The last time I saw that was a long time ago—a long, long time ago.

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So I don't know. The Liberals are asking me to look at the crisis in terms of our high dollar, which is no longer high, and in terms of the high cost of oil, which is now down to where it was more than a year ago, and it looks as if it's continuing to decline. The cost of Brent is down to \$81; the cost of Texas was down to \$88, \$89, before I walked in here. I don't know what has happened in the last hour and a half. Maybe it went up or maybe it went down a few cents. But the reality is, it's not the high dollar or the high international oil price that is pushing this motion.

So I look down to the next one: the US economic slowdown. Now, there is no doubt that there is a slowdown in that country, and there is no doubt that the disastrous policies of George Bush have, over the years, caused that country to slide into an economic decline the likes of which it has not seen since the 1929 crash.

There is no doubt that the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, where \$5 billion a day is being spent, the whole crisis around the financial institutions, the loss of big financial institutions like Bear Stearns and Lehman Brothers—all of those things surely have had an effect. I wouldn't deny that. But the stock market today—as I walked in, the Dow was up 135 points. Now, that may not be significant, given all of what's happened in the last

week. But I also have to say that I came in here expecting a great deal more than what is contained in this motion.

It went on to talk about the worldwide economic turmoil—I have to agree that that is happening; that's the one thing I do agree with—and then it goes on to talk about increased global manufacturing competition. Well, yeah, I guess we do have that. Canada is a signatory to NAFTA. Canada has signed on to many of the accords of the World Bank, at many stages, in trying to liberalize trade. And, of course, because we live in a developed country, a country rich in resources, a country where people are not expected to work for tiny, tiny wages, I guess we are facing some pretty stiff competition.

But I want to ask the question: If this is the rationale that the Premier is talking about—I waited for him to say, "We have to counter that with something." One of the obvious things is to be proudly pro-Ontario or proudly pro-Canadian, and for a government to proclaim that they are going to buy goods and services that are manufactured in or come from this country. I waited for a Buy Ontario policy or something to come from his lips, and sadly, I did not hear it.

So four of the five purports that were in the beginning—blaming things on the high dollar, which is no longer as high as it was; the high cost of international oil, which has declined significantly over the last month and is now at its lowest level in years; the US economic slowdown, which was not acknowledged before today; and the increased global manufacturing competition of a government that is not willing to acknowledge that this has been a factor in the past, and is unwilling or unable to proclaim a Buy Ontario or a Buy Canadian policy—seems to me to give very little credibility to that which flowed after.

I started to look at some of this other stuff; I started to look at what is in there. What struck me first is what is not in this motion. I remember those heady days of a year ago, in the midst of a provincial election campaign. I remember listening to the Premier while he was out there on the stump, talking to people about his bold and brave ideas for the people of Ontario. I listened intently to him then, and I listened intently to him again today. What was he going to do about those bold and brave ideas? He's got a whole bunch of tired things that he talks about in the body here, but what were the brave and bold things he talked about a year ago? There were two of them: One was the eradication of poverty—25 in five—by 25% over five years, and the second one he talked about is finally doing something for those people who live in this province and who are disabled. I was looking for something in the body of what he had to say today that would give me some measure of comfort that in the midst of this economic crisis he in fact was going to hold true to those bold statements that he talked about in the past.

On the issue of poverty, which I hold very dear: I asked many, many questions in this Legislature, as every member knows, and I have yet to hear answers that, at least to me, are satisfactory. But I listened today, hoping against hope that there would be something because the

Premier, following the election, instituted what he called his "poverty minister"—a minister responsible for looking after the poverty issues—and that was the Honourable Deb Matthews. She went around this province week after week, holding private consultation meetings with people, trying to find out what the government could do on the issues of poverty. I know they were private because I tried to get into many of them and was refused admission at the door. It was unsettling to me but, you know, I persisted and finally, on my fourth attempt in Scarborough, I was able to gain admission. But there were many, many of these poverty consultations that took place. I have yet to see the report, but we are given to understand that many things came out of those poverty consultations, the same that came out of the ones that I held myself.

I held my own in order to listen to poor people—to listen to what they had to say about living in poverty, what they thought their solutions were—and I am led to believe by the minister that in fact these same things will be reflected in the government's report come December. What they had to say was that they were looking at economic security—or income security; excuse me. They were looking at, I think, not novel things but good things like the fact that there is not enough money on Ontario Works or ODSP to cover health, special diet, dental, drugs or back-to-school expenses. They had ideas that the minimum wage was inadequate. They had ideas about the respectful treatment of ODSP and OW recipients when they went into the welfare offices in the various municipalities in the province of Ontario. They talked about the need to end the clawback. They talked about the need for education and training and to reduce the complexity of the system so that ordinary people, often without the necessary tools or education, could access them. They talked about affordable housing. They talked about public and community services and education training and health care. They talked about government accountability and children's health. They talked about so many things that I thought this Premier had embraced. Yet, when the financial curtain starts to close and the Premier wants to talk, he talks about everything except the poverty file.

When asking questions over the past couple of weeks, as I have, it seems to me that it is on the back burner; it seems to me that there are not going to be any monies available; it seems to me that the expectations created throughout all these public consultations and the Premier's own announcements are going to be dashed.

Many people have heightened expectations. There is a group out there called 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction. They have written so many letters. I just grabbed the most recent one that was on my desk just to quote a few lines. These are letters that they sent directly to Premier McGuinty and copies to all members of this Legislature. The last one, September 8, and I'll read the first paragraph and then one later on, is pretty compelling:

"As we approach the beginning of the Legislature's fall session, a historic achievement on poverty reduction

is within Ontario's reach. Building on the past 12 months of consultation and deliberation, we are writing to urge you and your colleagues to put poverty reduction at the top of your agenda this fall and to deliver on a multi-year plan to cut poverty by 25% in five years, and at least 50% in 10 years, backed by significant investments."

That's what they wrote because they had pretty high hopes one month ago today.

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In the media release that accompanied this letter, they also wrote: "The 25 in 5: Network for Poverty Reduction will continue to monitor the government's commitment on poverty reduction. A series of public events are scheduled around October 17 (the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty) to continue to build momentum for a strong Ontario poverty reduction strategy."

I looked at this motion. I looked and I looked and I looked, and I searched for some kind of commitment that the Premier was going to follow through on this on this much-vaunted plan, and there is nary a word. I listened to him intently today while he spoke for some 35 minutes, and there was nary a word. Not a single thing was said about the poverty reduction plan, so I must assume—and I think those people who are part of 25 in 5 and all of those 92 recommendations that were made and the hundreds of groups that came forward—that their hopes must be pretty much dashed. I think they'll probably wait until October 22 to see them dashed completely.

I think that's wrong because, quite frankly, if an economic strategy is to work for Ontario, it has to include the poorest of the poor. It has to include those people who may not have the financial wherewithal in an economic downturn to be able to survive. We have to look out for the children. We have to look for those who are disabled. We have to look for those who are unemployed. Surely that is the mark of a good government, and this government seems intent to ignoring the lofty goals it set out only one year ago.

I looked at what was in the motion and again listened intently to the Premier on the second issue, that of disabilities. It was only just two weeks ago in this House that we were arguing Bill 77. The government voted unanimously for Bill 77, and the two opposition parties voted against it. I have to tell you that I came in expecting to vote for Bill 77, because there had been some changes made by the government which would allow, in one case, for the regulations to be posted and, in another, to allow the posting on the walls in community agencies of the rights of disabled and intellectually disabled persons. But I couldn't bring myself to do it, because the government would not commit itself to a number of key factors, including the rights of workers who work within the system and the rights of people not to have their homes entered without a search warrant and the like. There were other reasons as well.

But what was more important, I think, what was not said around that entire debate and what was not said or committed to by the government was that there would be any money made available to help those disabled persons

who live in Ontario and for those who are seeking alternate forms of help in order to allow them to live fully and within the community with their disability.

There were some considerable discussions that took place during the committee, and one of the people who came before our committee was a gentleman by the name of Mr. Pruessen. I had not met him before the committee days, but what he had to say to our committee was absolutely spot-on. What he had to say, I think, needs to be repeated today as we talk about the economy, because he clearly understood that for a government program with lofty goals like that one was, there would have to be a corresponding amount of monies made available in budgets or committed to by the government to make it happen.

So when I listened to the Premier today, I was looking for that. I was looking for some kind of signal or indication that his five-point plan would allow for social policy development, which he and his government seemed to have championed only last year. Well, Mr. Pruessen said it far better than I could, so I'd like to quote him in part. This is from the Hansard, I believe of August 5, 2008, when he appeared before the committee in terms of Bill 77 here in Toronto:

"It is a wonderful thing that you have worked with families and agencies to chart a road forward, but it is an achievement that now carries serious responsibilities with it. Do not imagine that the admiration that has been generated by the transformation effort to date will either linger or quietly fade away if words do not translate into deeds. There will almost surely be a whirlwind of disappointment and anger if the government sees the essentially preparatory provisions of Bill 77 as sufficient or if the government believes that the template or shell conceptualized in this bill will allow the transformation effort to quietly come to rest on a back burner.

"Do not imagine, either, that tiny funding increases will allow achievement of a necessarily ambitious vision, especially if minimalist new funding is dedicated primarily to administrative procedures, application centres and the like. If this happens, then the template or the shell that Bill 77 is designed to create will be seen as the set-up for a shell game, and 'shell game' will be a fair and loudly proclaimed label.

"To conclude, we urge the government to continue as it has begun—to continue boldly as it has admirably begun. Take the splendid impulse to transform the services provided to Ontario citizens whose needs and vulnerabilities have been neglected for decades and match fine words with powerful actions."

You can imagine, after days of asking questions in this House to try to determine whether the financial statement which is coming forward on October 22 will contain such a provision and not being answered, to see, in writing, the government's new plan—in writing, that there is no plan whatsoever to expand community services, there is no plan to look after the poor, there is no plan or monies conceptualized within the key framework of the much-vaunted five-point plan to do the initiatives that people

are counting on and in which they believe this government. Mr. Pruessen was absolutely right when he said that if the fine words and actions are not matched after the bill was passed, then it will be seen as a shell game. Sadly, that's exactly what I think has happened here; this has been a shell game.

I'd just like to quote some of the other people who had perhaps not as eloquent words but conveyed much the same message. There was the Fair Share Task Force, which wanted to address the issue of funding equity and wanted the commitment of the government. There was Autism Ontario, which asked for a commitment from the government for resources. There was Autism Ontario and another group of people, including Hiltz, Ensemble, Individualized Funding Coalition, that asked for adequate resources to be forthcoming. There were groups, which asked for legislative guarantees of support, and groups like Woodview that said that if the new legislation is to be effective, then adequate funding needs to be provided, and went on to say that while there are competing funding demands placed on government, the cost of not providing adequate services to adults with developmental disabilities is high. There is a group called Tayside that talked about making the funding of identified essential services with individual disabilities mandatory. Finally, there was, again, the group from Mississauga that Mr. Pruessen belonged to: "Problems that have been profoundly neglected for decades cannot be solved without the provision of significant resources—new resources."

It appears from my reading of this resolution that the only thing that is being affirmed is the government's five-point plan, and the only priorities that this government now has are confined to those of health care, education, the environment and public safety, and that everything else seems to have gone by the wayside. I think, very sadly for this government, that they are not doing what they were elected to do.

In terms of this motion, it's designed to highlight the government's five-point plan, which they stand here and say is much-vaunted and is a wonderful plan. They stand up on their feet every day, and no matter what questions they are asked, they go back to their five-point plan.

The government has, in fact, ignored reality and the threat of a recession for some time now. I remember, and it was only several months ago, statements by the finance minister. Last December, when he was delivering his fall economic statement, the finance minister said, "The fundamentals of our economy are vital and strong." Then in the spring he further compounded that statement and further elaborated on that statement when he was being questioned about asset-backed commercial paper and the mess of the United States. When bank economists were lowering their expectations, the finance minister did not. He stated to this House, "The economy is fundamentally strong and resilient." This was in March 2008.

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In fact, the government chose to ignore the looming problems that manifested themselves day in, day out in the newspapers, week in and week out in countries like

the United States, across Europe and in the Canadian economy. Resource workers could have and did tell the government that things were not going well. Manufacturing workers did come forward and tell the government that things were not going well. The unions that represented both of those groups came forward and told the government that things were not going well. Surely the opposition parties echoed all of those statements in this House.

There was and remains a crisis in manufacturing and in the resource sector, particularly forestry, in this province. There were and remain huge numbers of job losses in those sectors. It is calculated that since July 2004 there have been 230,000 Ontarians in the manufacturing sector alone who have lost their jobs. We all know about those jobs. We all know where they have occurred because they have occurred in literally every community across this province. Only today, to wake up and see 430 new jobs, 80% of the workforce at DDM Plastics in Tillsonburg—they're gone. Just last week, to wake up and read in the financial section of the newspaper about 500 jobs lost at Volvo in Goderich, about to be gone. It will devastate a small town of 7,500 people, absolutely; it is the major employer. To look at Niagara last month, 800 jobs were lost at John Deere in Welland, and the temporary layoff of 480 at AbitibiBowater. There have been about 100,000 jobs lost in the city of Toronto, where I live, in the past four years—100,000 jobs—and 25,000 in Hamilton. Almost half of the manufacturing jobs in Thunder Bay that existed five years ago are not there today.

All of these people could have told and did tell the Premier and the finance minister what was going on, but it appears until today to have fallen on deaf ears. Workers who have lost good jobs over the past year would be stunned to know that it is only now that the McGuinty government is proposing a resolution, and it is only now that they are coming forward with ideas to, quite frankly, simply reiterate their five-point plan. I think the workers in this province who have lost their jobs will be, and are, very disappointed.

The finance minister last week put out a second-quarter economics account and hurriedly called a news conference, which I attended. He tried to put on a pretty brave face, I want to tell you, in the face of the circumstances, by pointing out that although there had been a decline in the gross domestic product of Ontario in the first quarter, the second quarter had shown a tiny, tiny, tiny increase; I believe it was 0.1%. Overall, given the circumstances and what was contained within the body of his report, it was clear that notwithstanding the tiny, tiny increase in the second quarter, due largely to the selling of manufactured goods stockpiles, in fact, the province declined for a second quarter, which, most economists will state, is the start of a recession. It continues to decline.

Yesterday, TD Economics forecasted that there will be negative employment growth in 2009. Their report reads, "Real GDP growth in Ontario is expected to barely

advance in 2008 and 2009, placing it last amongst its peers. The lagging nature of employment in reflecting economic conditions leaves significant downside risks to the job market, especially since the manufacturing sector is expected to continue to bleed jobs and this will disproportionately hit the province."

Again, what is the Liberal answer to all of this? To reiterate a five-point plan. That's all they have, that's all the place they're going, and with the greatest of respect, it's not going to work.

When confronted with the real evidence that the plan isn't working, the government is telling people that things are good. I don't know where they come from. I don't know whether the government has caught Harperitis. I watched the great debate on television, or most of it, in English, and a little in French, to watch the Prime Minister twist and turn about the economy. I will tell you that the people of this province and the people of this country were not buying into it because in the days, nearly a week, since that debate occurred, his numbers have continued to decline in all of the polls. Most of the people who were questioned about their changing from Conservative to some other party have indicated his not being empathetic to the cause of those who found themselves on the unemployment lines or for the state of the economy. I think that the Premier has caught the same disease in terms of what he is trying to say and in terms of how he is dealing with the losses. I have to ask: If the plan is working, why is the forestry sector's decline wiping out towns in northern Ontario? If the plan is working, how is it that reports show falling growth and serious job losses looming in other sectors? If the plan is working, show us where the plan is working.

We have always been a party that believes in putting families first and we have always been a party that believes that people should have a good job, a good-paying job. When and if it ever happens that good-paying jobs are lost, there needs to be a social safety net. I remember, as a young man, working in a place in downtown Toronto called Dunlop's. It was a rubber factory. It was a dirty, stinking place with a lousy safety record where men and women would walk around with appendages gone, limbs missing—who had been injured, who died young, who worked on machinery that could literally suck you through the machine in a matter of seconds to your death. I witnessed all of that. I remember when the place closed down that there was no social safety net but that the Legislature of the province of Ontario mandated and passed legislation as it was shutting down to protect some of the workers so that there was some monies when they left, so that there was some severance, depending on how long they had worked there; the province came forward, back in those years, which was in the late 1960s, to do exactly that. Now we're saying that people who have committed a lifetime to an employer are treated unfairly, and where is the government's plan around all of that? There is absolutely nothing in the five-point plan that will deal with people who lose their jobs. There is nothing in the plan that will

see them educated in total numbers, save and except, I guess, the 1,100 who have taken advantage of a government plan that doesn't seem to be working.

The McGuinty government doesn't believe in being activist, quite clearly. We have suggested many things to this government that we think are good suggestions. I am prepared, and I understand that if the government rejects the suggestions of the opposition, it is their right to do so. They were elected. They have a majority. But I would ask, if you don't like ours, what are yours? The five-point plan isn't about much. It is a statement of lofty principles that amounts to little or nothing. We are suggesting things like a five-year guarantee of an industrial hydro rate so that Ontario's manufacturing and resource companies can count on stable, competitive hydro policies at a time when many competing jurisdictions have far lower industrial rates. That doesn't seem to be all that difficult. The country of Germany has an industrial hydro rate; indeed, most countries in Europe have an industrial hydro rate. We have to compete against jurisdictions in North America, and both of our neighbours, Quebec and Manitoba, have lower rates than we do. If we want to compete with them and with foreign jurisdictions in Europe, then we are going to have to have a rate that reflects that.

We are suggesting a jobs protection commissioner. The government has said no to this on every occasion, yet we believe it will help at-risk companies overcome financial difficulties and save jobs. The government doesn't like the idea. What else will you do to save the jobs?

1700

We believe in a Buy Ontario policy that would ensure that streetcars, subways and buses continue to be made right here in Ontario, resulting in the protection of thousands of good-paying jobs. I don't think that's a radical idea. Certainly, almost every jurisdiction in the United States has adopted that; Mexico has adopted that; almost all of the European Community has adopted this policy. And if you don't believe in the workers and the products of this country, particularly of this province, then the Premier should stand up and say so. It is not always the economically right thing to do, to buy goods or service at the lowest possible rate, because the people we are buying from are ourselves, and we need to protect those jobs and those people because they are contributing constantly to our economy and our society.

We believe in tougher plant-closure legislation that would ensure everything is done to prevent a profitable plant or mill from closing. In addition, we believe in enhanced mandated severance.

Many times, companies close even though they're profitable. They close because they can make more profit somewhere else, although they're not losing money here. I'm thinking about CanGro. I'm thinking about the last cannery that closed here in Ontario just a little while ago. Why did it close? It closed because you could grow the peaches and pears somewhere else a little cheaper, and we could import them—notwithstanding the cost of transportation—at the same cost. It seems to me that was a wasted opportunity as well.

We're talking about the expansion of severance eligibility and an increase in advance notice in mass layoff situations to allow people to make the necessary changes in their lives and to find jobs elsewhere, whether it be in Ontario or, as the Premier is wont to accept, they go out to Saskatchewan or Alberta.

We're talking about pension and wage protection that would make sure that workers get every penny they are owed from the employer when their company becomes insolvent or goes into bankruptcy. Right now they're at the bottom of the heap. The banks have first right.

Mr. Paul Miller: Bill 6.

Mr. Michael Prue: Bill 6. My friend reminds me that his Bill 6, which was denied a third reading—

Mr. Paul Miller: Second.

Mr. Michael Prue:—second reading at committee, was not allowed to go forward, and would have done precisely that. We think that people who lose their jobs should not be at the bottom; they should be at the top, especially when, in many cases, they have given a lifetime of service to that company and find out that their pension, their assets and their severance are not going to be paid.

Finally, we believe in a refundable manufacturing and resource investment tax credit that would provide a real incentive for manufacturers and processors to invest in the building, equipment and machinery that lead to high-paying, good-quality jobs.

We don't believe in willy-nilly tax cuts across the board. I'll be very blunt about that. When you do that, you give tax cuts to profit-making corporations that don't need it. I will tell you, for one, I don't believe that Exxon, Shell, Mobil or any of those groups need a tax cut from the province of Ontario. They made billions of dollars last year, and yet—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Hear, hear.

Mr. Michael Prue:—and the minister says, "Hear, hear"—that is the same thing that happened when the Minister of Finance stood up and lowered corporate tax cuts, because they were included, as every other corporation.

We believe that the tax cuts have to be targeted at those who are suffering, and right now, it's the manufacturing, industrial and forestry sectors that need those monies.

I give enough money to the most profitable corporations on the face of the earth every time I fill up my gas tank, and so does every other individual. I don't think the government of Ontario should be subsidizing them further, nor do I think we should be subsidizing very rich corporations like banks that charge usurious fees for things like credit cards. Every time I withdraw a little bit of money out of my account, I get dinged by a buck, or a buck and a half, to take money out of my own account. I rather resent that, and yet they get tax cuts, too. I'm not sure that the government wants to be, or should be, going there.

There are a few things I'd like to talk about as well, and one is the financial crisis regulations. Nobody has talked about this—not the Premier, not the leader of the

opposition—so maybe I can weigh in on that. People are watching the stock market in dismay every single day. People who would ordinarily not look at it from one week to the other are looking in dismay at the wild, unpredictable and seemingly irrational swings: up 500 points, down 800 points, up 300 points, down 900 points. This is all taking place in one week. This is what is happening for weeks and weeks on end. People think it's irrational, and they are worried. Ontarians' savings are tied to the stock market: their pensions, their mutual funds, their RRSPs and everything else; it's all tied together. Even members of this Legislature—probably most of them—get a very small amount of money each month in lieu of a pension, which is invested, in the overwhelming majority of cases, I think, in the stock market. They must watch this too, and they must know what's going on.

Ordinary Ontarians are watching as the Ontario Securities Commission is dealing with stock manipulation and fraud on an almost daily basis. When the finance committee sat down and discussed this with the OSC chairman and some of the senior people, they said there are more than, I believe, 250 charges laid per year by the commission against people trying to manipulate the market here in Ontario. Just so you understand that, there are about 250 trading days in a year, so quite literally, somebody is charged every day with trying to finagle the market, trying to do things they ought not to be doing, and those are the ones who get caught.

So people are looking at what's happening, and in the newspaper every day, people are inundated with all these schemes that are coming home to roost. Who would have known a year ago about asset-backed commercial paper? Who would have known a year ago about toxic mortgages or default credit swaps? The Ontario Securities Commission has jurisdiction over all these, and yet this government is not attempting to mandate them in any way to stop this fraud, and they should be. That should be part of the economic plan to bring security and stability to the largest trading unit in Canada, the one that is located here in the city of Toronto.

We would like to offer some real solutions to this government. I'm not making this in the form of a motion, although I do have an amendment to the amendment coming shortly. We would like to offer some real solutions on securities reform. First of all is the creation of a financial products safety commission just like we have for consumer goods—it has been recommended by one prominent economist. This would address the invention of new financial products not intended to manage risk but to create risk.

We know what happened to Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. We know that people were able to go out and get mortgages with absolutely no money down, and we know that when the cost of the mortgage went up and the price of the home declined, there were defaults on those mortgages literally across the entire United States of America, and that precipitated the financial crisis. We need to have a financial products safety commission that

looks into this to make sure we don't get caught in the same kind of bind.

We want to ensure that regulators oversee areas of finance that are now unregulated—to quote another financial expert, “If it quacks like a bank, regulate it like a bank.” This includes real regulation of hedge funds and large pools of capital that are able to manipulate markets for quick profits. We think that ordinary investors need this kind of protection, and ordinary people are looking forward to this government doing something about that in the middle of a financial crisis.

We're talking about strengthening regulation that restricts leverage for all financial companies. Leverage is the proportion of debt used in speculation and was one of the causes of the current crisis. What we're simply asking is to strengthen the regulations that exist and further restrict leverage for all financial companies so that they cannot and will not be allowed to get into the circumstances that have resulted in huge, multi-billion dollar payouts and buyouts in Britain, the United States, Ireland and, most recently, a day or two ago, Iceland. We don't want to be in the same circumstances, and we look to the Ontario government to do something about that.

We are asking that the Ontario government deal with the conflicts of interest that are so much a part of securities regulation. I was on the finance committee when we sat down, more than four years ago now, and looked at the regulations of the Ontario Securities Commission. The number one recommendation that was agreed on by all parties at that time was to separate the investigative function from the adjudicative function, to make it an adversarial process, so that the person who had done the investigation was not the same person who sat on the tribunal to decide. The government said they would do so in about a year. Well, here we are, three or four years into it, and nothing at all has happened. I would think that this would make for a much safer investment opportunity in the province of Ontario if we followed the advice that the finance committee was given at that time and that the government has ill seen fit to enforce. These are just a few of the proposals.

1710

I would like to conclude, and then I have an amendment to the amendment. Seeing that I still have enough time to do all of that, I'm going to. What I would like to conclude with—if I can just find my notes as to where I am—is a statement that we believe that politics in this chamber, this House, this Legislature and this province should be all about people, the 13 million people who call Ontario home, the 13 million people who work here and live here, the 13 million people who invest their lives in the prosperity of this province. It's about a fair deal for people who have built and continue to build this province; they're looking for a fair deal from this government. We only have to look at what happened in the United States when George Bush and his administration put forward the plan—some \$700 billion or \$800 billion—to bail out the financial sector. There was a near-riot that occurred in most of the United States and

certainly on Wall Street, and you had a whole bunch of legislators in the House of Representatives who would not follow suit. They were angry because they did not see it as a fair deal. People who were being bought out and were being backed were those same people who had ripped off the system.

There was a gentleman who was called before the legislative committee of the House of Representatives a few days ago. He denied the fact that he had been given a \$400-million buyout after his company had failed and that thousands upon thousands of people had lost their life savings, but he did admit that he did get \$250 million. I think the people of the province of Ontario want to make sure that their government here in Ontario will not countenance such an action and, in fact, will pass some legislation or regulations to ensure that that does not happen here.

It is absolutely heart-wrenching to go out and meet people who have lost their jobs. I've had an opportunity in the last few weeks to travel the length and breadth, I swear, of this province, going to places even in your own riding of Essex, Mr. Speaker. I have been in Windsor, London, Kingston, Ottawa, Oshawa, Kitchener, Stratford, Hamilton and so many places, listening to heartfelt stories of people who have lost their jobs. Some of those who are in their 50s and early 60s have lost their job and despair about ever finding work again. In some cases, they have been given inadequate pensions or severances and will live off those until the money runs out. In other cases, we see people who are younger and who are at the bottom of the seniority list. I met some of them in Oshawa. I met them, and they were on layoff. One of them worked one day a week and another one hadn't been recalled for duty for months, a young woman with two children, trying to bring them up herself.

They are in despair about what has happened, and we know that there is despair across the length and breadth of this province. When you look into their eyes, you want to tell them that you can do something, that you will try almost anything, and I am asking this government to try almost anything, not the tired five-point plan, but almost anything to get them back to work and to give them hope.

Surely, Franklin Roosevelt taught us all a lesson from 1932; surely, he said that the biggest thing to fear was fear itself, and he went about to transform an economy that was in much the same situation as we're about to find ourselves in. He did that by building upon the hope that people had so that they saw a brighter day, so that they saw that their government was trying to take the necessary actions.

The families who have lost their income due to job loss found out that there's no protection for their severances, for their benefits, for their hard-earned pension plans. We want to talk about the real costs of poverty. We want to talk about that, and we think the government needs to. What is the real cost of having a person with an intellectual disability live in poverty and be mired in poverty their entire life? They can get \$999 from the government, but if they get even a meagre part-time job,

it's clawed back. What is the real cost? What is the real cost in terms of initiative and human ingenuity? What is the real cost to their human dignity? What is the real cost of doing nothing for the kids? What is the real cost of having people live in dilapidated housing? All that needs to be addressed.

These are people, many of whom have spent a lifetime paying taxes, who found themselves in hard times. When they need a little help, it seems that the government is nowhere to be seen and only talks about its much-vaunted five-point plan. It's not right and it's not fair, and we need to do something about it.

Back in 1991 when the province was in the same difficult circumstances, Dalton McGuinty said something that I'd like to quote. He was not the Premier then; he was the Leader of the Opposition, or maybe—I don't know if he was the Leader of the Opposition then. He could have been—I'm trying to think back—but he was here in the Legislature, and he did make the following statement.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Was it 1991 or 2000?

Mr. Michael Prue: It was 1991.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I was probably the opposition leader then.

Mr. Michael Prue: Okay, maybe it was you. But Dalton McGuinty said the following in a speech to the Legislature. I'm not sure what his—it was the same Dalton McGuinty, though, and he said this to then-Premier Bob Rae:

"This House heard the disturbing news from the Treasury yesterday regarding our province's economy and the devastating impact the recession is having on employment.... I urge this government, I implore this government to develop and implement a program immediately to address the very real and specific needs of those affected by loss of employment." That was Dalton McGuinty, March 19, 1991, in this Legislature.

Before reading my amendment to the amendment, I would like to close by asking which Dalton McGuinty we will see on October 22. Will we see the Dalton McGuinty who declared that immediate government action was necessary to sustain and create jobs and protect workers during layoffs, as he said in 1991, or will we see the Dalton McGuinty who will talk about his five-point plan that seems to be going nowhere? I certainly hope it's the former, and I despair that it may be the latter.

This is a difficult debate. Oftentimes, governments have limited resources in what they can do. I remember standing here in the Legislature one day when Mr. Wilkinson, now the Minister of Innovation, stood up and was taking credit for a huge number of jobs that he said were being created by the government of Ontario. I stood up to chastise him a little and said, "My colleague, I hope you are going to take the criticism on the day when it comes—and it invariably will, given the cyclical nature of economics—when there are huge numbers of job losses." He assured me that he would not do that.

It's very easy for governments to talk about the jobs they are creating and take credit for those, but it's very

difficult for governments to take the blame when there are job losses; they always have some other factor to blame it on. I'm saying that any government member who has stood in this House before and taken credit for job creation should be equally willing to stand in this House and take the blame for job losses. If you're not willing to do it today, then please refrain in the future from taking credit for job increases. Please refrain. If you're not willing to be on one side of the book, you shouldn't be on the other.

1720

I'd like to move an amendment to the amendment that was moved by my colleague Mr. Runciman, the leader of the official opposition. The amendment to the amendment reads as follows:

"That the government needs to immediately respond to current economic instability, the 230,000 jobs lost in the manufacturing sector, and the 40,000 direct and indirect jobs lost in the forest products industry by implementing a strategy that includes:

"—an industrial hydro rate so that Ontario's manufacturing and resource companies can count on stable, competitive hydro policies at a time when many competing jurisdictions have far lower industrial rates;

"—a jobs protection commissioner to help at-risk companies overcome financial difficulties and save jobs;

"—a Buy Ontario policy that would ensure that streetcars, subways and buses continue to be made right here in Ontario, resulting in the protection of thousands of good-paying jobs;

"—tougher plant closure legislation that would ensure that everything is done to prevent a profitable plant or mill from closing, and enhanced, mandated severance;

"—expansion of severance eligibility and an increase in advance notice in mass layoff situations;

"—pension and wage protection that would make sure that workers get every penny they are owed from their employer when their company becomes insolvent or goes into bankruptcy; and finally,

"—a refundable manufacturing and resource investment tax credit that would provide a real incentive for manufacturers and processors to invest in the building, equipment and machinery that leads to high-paying, good-quality jobs."

I have three copies for the Chair and I'll send them down with page Justin.

In conclusion, the Premier finished his speech by asking all parties to commit and to give their input into how we can help, and these are made in that same spirit. I'm hoping that if the Premier is true to his word, and I believe him as a man who is, he will take a look at these and include them in his motion.

I also believe that the leader of the official opposition will accept those as an amendment to his amendment because they are intended to help the people of this province and intended to help the people in this time of economic turmoil.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Prue has moved an amendment to the amendment to the main motion.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Administrator of the province has assented to certain bills in his office.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The following are the titles of the bills to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 77, An Act to provide services to persons with developmental disabilities, to repeal the Developmental Services Act and to amend certain other statutes / *Projet de loi 77, Loi visant à prévoir des services pour les personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle, à abroger la Loi sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle et à modifier d'autres lois.*

Bill 90, An Act to enact the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act, 2008, to repeal the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act and to make related amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 90, Loi édictant la Loi de 2008 sur la négociation collective dans les collèges, abrogeant la Loi sur la négociation collective dans les collèges et apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.*

ONTARIO ECONOMY

ÉCONOMIE DE L'ONTARIO

(continued / suite)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: It's a great opportunity and privilege to stand here to debate and be involved in a very critical time in the history of our province and country, and I just want to put a few things forward for consideration.

First of all, there's been much discussion about the wording of the motion put forward by the Premier. There is much discussion about the process. But I think all of us in this House have to acknowledge the fact that what the Premier is saying very simply is that he would like all of us in this House to put forward our ideas on what we can do to make life better for the people of Ontario as we go through this very traumatic transition. He said he would accept criticism and suggestions, and he's open to listening to those, whether it be opposition or government members. Certainly that's what we're here to do.

The criticisms are acknowledged. There's no one here who's beyond criticism. The Premier himself said he accepts criticism, as we all are willing to do. But we must also accept some facts. The Premier, from day one, acknowledged the fact that if Ontario was going to be competitive, and that means create jobs and continue to grow this Ontario economy, we had to improve our skill set for the citizens of Ontario. That's why one of his first points of emphasis was investing in our universities and colleges and our public education system, because it was so evident that with the world flattening out—whether it be what's happening in India or China—we had to have the skills, abilities and knowledge set of our citizens on

the same level as anywhere in the world, because we're in competition with the whole world. That's why he invested, and we as a government invested, in our colleges and universities—\$6 billion. Six billion dollars—unprecedented. We have invested billions of extra dollars in our public education system for the same reasons.

From day one, the Premier was looking down the road in terms of the challenges. A lot of people don't think that's very sexy, and it doesn't make the front page of the paper. But if we don't have people who are literate, skilled and who have the training for this new economy, there's no way we'll be able to have the wealth in this province not only to provide basic services but to help the disadvantaged and the poor. The poor can't be helped unless the economy is strong, and the economy isn't strong unless people have those skills that you need in the 21st century.

It doesn't come by inheritance. We don't have oil in the ground here in Ontario. We had, in Sarnia, years ago. We have to work for everything we've ever had through our blood, sweat and tears. Our farmers, our miners, our small businessmen work. There's nobody giving them oil out of the ground.

We have to be entrepreneurial; we have had to be entrepreneurial here in Ontario. We work in factories; we work in mines. This is what people in Ontario have always done and they're proud of that, but it doesn't mean that the people of Ontario aren't as good as the people of Alberta. The Alberta economy is booming and the price of oil is going through the roof. We have to stand up and defend the people of Ontario and look where we're at and where we're going.

It's not just the present government in Ottawa. We had this same problem with the former Liberal government in Ottawa. I remember having face-to-face discussions with former Liberal colleagues, saying, "Don't you guys get it?" Everybody in Ottawa stands up for Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. You guys go to Ottawa and your mouths are sealed. You don't even mention the word "Ontario," God forbid, when you're in Ottawa.

These were the Liberals I was talking to. We had some people saying, "Don't raise that with Liberals. You're going to be in trouble." Well, the Premier had the backbone to confront the Liberals in Ottawa at the time and told them, "You have to speak up for Ontario. We have to have fairness for the people of Ontario, not for the government of Ontario."

The money that leaves Ontario leaves the pockets of those hard-working miners and farmers in Ontario and goes to the pockets of other Canadians in other provinces, who love that Ontario money. All we're saying is, keep a little bit here because our farmers and miners and our small business people need that at this time. We can't keep shipping these hard-earned dollars to the rest of the country at this time. Even it out a bit.

The Premier has been forceful with Paul Martin, he's been forceful with Prime Minister Harper, and the same thing: Liberals and Conservatives saying, "Let's stand up for fairness," and he's done that right from day one.

He saw that unless we became more innovative, unless we started to be more futuristic in our approach to our economy, we weren't going to succeed with a standstill attitude. We can't always be looking out the rear-view mirror. That's what we've been doing for too long in Canada, perhaps. He is saying, "Look ahead," and that's why the Premier established the Ministry of Research and Innovation, the first ministry of its kind in Canada to invest in new ideas and new technology so we can create the next generation of jobs. He did that. That's not something in a five-point plan. He did it. We have that ministry, and it's active all over Ontario, creating new jobs.

In the last budget we established something very concrete for people losing their jobs, the Second Career plan, saying that people need help to bridge into a second career. This gives someone up to \$20,000 over two years to get into a new career. You're laid off perhaps as a miner and now maybe you want to become a police officer. That will bridge you. That's something we did in the budget. The \$1 billion is there. So you can't say, "The Premier doesn't care. It's just now because he's got the motion, all of a sudden he cares." In the last budget, \$1 billion was there because the Premier did care—and all of us. I'm not saying the opposition doesn't care; I just want to remind them that that \$1 billion was there in the last budget to help people who lose their jobs.

1730

They talk about the forestry sector and the commodities sector in Canada. We gave \$1 billion to stabilize the forestry sector. Perhaps the opposition could tell us what we're going to do to bring the forestry sector back when the Americans, who buy most of our forestry products, aren't building homes anymore and aren't buying Canadian lumber. What do we do? Are we going to give away our forestry products to the Americans—to do what? The Americans are not building homes. Sad to say, they're in foreclosure. They're not building anymore.

Our cars—somebody said we should have a Buy Canadian, Buy Ontario strategy. That's great. We would all love that. But what do we tell the Americans who buy most of our cars made in Ontario? Eighty-five per cent of the cars made in Ontario are bought by Americans. So if we say, "We're just going to buy Canadian," what if the Americans then start saying, "We're just going to buy American"? That's why you can't have these simplistic bromides all the time; you have to look at the complexity of things. We do promote buying Canadian. We're buying streetcars in Thunder Bay. We're spending I don't know how many hundreds of millions of dollars to make work for people in Thunder Bay who are building these fine subway cars in Thunder Bay. So we are trying to do that, but there's no perfect, magic bullet here.

We've always heard the other bromides. "All you have to do is have competitive tax cuts, more tax cuts." It's been tried. The Americans have tax-cut themselves to death. Literally, they've done that. The tax-cut king has

been President of the United States for eight years. That's all he's done, billions and billions. Has it helped forestall the financial meltdown? No. Has it helped the housing crisis in the States? No. Tax cuts are great, and we all try to look for targeted tax cuts, but it's not a bromide that solves anything.

Everyone was saying a year ago, "Oh, Ireland; we've got to be more like Ireland. It's the Irish miracle." Ireland is in recession.

Mr. John O'Toole: You bet your ass it is.

Mr. Mike Colle: The member from Durham well knows that. They were tax-cutting to beat the band in Ireland. They are now in a deep recession.

So tax cuts, yes, but very targeted and very thoughtful tax cuts. But across-the-board corporate tax cuts are very problematic, especially when you need those dollars, because we know that a tax cut means a service cut. We've seen it. We were here for eight years and we saw those, because that's the money that you forgo that could be used for building highways and new power plants.

The other situation that is unprecedented is what's happened to the United States financial markets. Sad to say, what happened there has impacted the whole world, not only Ontario. So the real challenge for us within this province is to try to get strategies in place which deal with this international meltdown, which is extremely complex, because the talking heads on CNN don't have any answers. You see 10 talking heads and they've got 10 answers. Then I always say to myself: Where were they when these derivative schemes were being drawn up, these hedge funds in the year 2000 when Phil Gramm, McCain's financial adviser, thought of a good way of dodging the regulations so they can put in these hedge funds and make billions from Lehman Brothers and everybody? Nobody of the talking heads and the financial gurus said, "Hey, this is wrong," because they were all lining their pockets with these billions of dollars, gambling with the money of the people who wanted to put their pension money into Wall Street and had no choice.

The other day I was in Lady York. Lady York is a small grocery store on Dufferin Street. I was talking to the gentleman who works in produce. I said, "How are things going, Oratio?" Oratio owned a small grocery store. Then, at 62 or 63, he had to sell that; now he's working in this other store. He said, "I'm very, very upset. That Mr. Bush, he cost me \$60,000 out of my pension." Oratio doesn't have a pension. He worked for himself. His financial adviser told him to put the money into segregated funds or something. Anyway, this ordinary, hard-working man who immigrated to Canada, worked his whole life, saving, saving, saving, thought he was okay: All of a sudden he looks—60,000 bucks gone.

How many Oratios are there all over Ontario, not because of anything that they did or didn't do, but because the cowboys on Wall Street and cowboys in all these financial—what do you call them?—boiler shops thought of these schemes to get rich? Everybody said,

"Wow. Look. It's happening there. I'm okay." Now that's all hitting ordinary people who have no defence against what's happened.

That's why we are trying to take this into account, because we cannot do it without your federal government. As I've said, I don't care whether it's the Liberals, Conservatives, NDP, Greens or the Bloc in Ottawa; we need their help because we have to have a voice in Ottawa.

Hon. James J. Bradley: They want to take away seats from Ontario.

Mr. Mike Colle: Talk about a voice. As the member from St. Catharines-Dalhousie says, the latest scheme they have, and the pages should listen to this, to redraw the electoral map is basically to require—for a new seat in Ontario, you need 200,000 voters. For a new seat anywhere else in Canada, you only need 100,000 voters.

Hon. James J. Bradley: In the west.

Mr. Mike Colle: In the west, especially. So we would lose more voices. It's bad enough that many of our federal MPs never mention the word "Ontario" when they go to Ottawa; we're going to have even less of a voice if this seat redistribution takes place. We need strong voices in Ottawa. Again, this is part of what the Premier said.

I've been reading a petition here for the last two years about EI unfairness. Why should a worker in Kitchener have to wait longer to get his or her EI benefits? Why should a worker in Kitchener get \$4,300 less in EI benefits than a worker somewhere else in Canada? Why do you have to go through hoops in Toronto to even dream of getting EI? Then, if you're not in EI, you're not eligible for retraining, because many programs require that you're EI-eligible.

So what do our friends do when they go to Ottawa—the MPs? They never mention this. They sit there and they never mention that there's this giant rip-off of Ontario workers, especially now at this time. The Premier has been saying that. He's also been saying, "Why does every part of Canada have an economic development office that helps areas, but there's no federal economic development program for southern Ontario, where all the manufacturing loss is taking place?" You would think that's the first place you'd have an economic development program from the federal government. We don't have one. So maybe, when the federal candidates come to the door, ask them why there's an EI gouging of Ontario workers; why there's no economic development plan for southern Ontario; why we lose 12 seats with a redistribution; why, in the transfer of health care money back to Ontario, there is a shortfall of hundreds of millions of dollars. We can go on and on and on.

As we know, there are billions of dollars—not millions, pages; do you know what a billion is?—leaving Ontario people's pockets because nobody in Ottawa will speak for the people in Ontario. Remember: It's not just here at Queen's Park. This money that goes into equalization leaves Orléans, it leaves Cambridge, it leaves Stoney Creek, it leaves Scarborough, it leaves East York,

Durham and Hamilton. How can you justify all this money leaving Hamilton to go to other parts of Canada when the Hamilton people need the money? Let the money stay in Hamilton, I say. Instead, the money leaves the poor people who are struggling and goes somewhere else, and our friends in Ottawa sit there and say nothing while the rip-off continues.

That's why the Premier's upset. That's why the Premier has launched this fairness campaign.

Another thing, the Building Canada program of infrastructure: We're short \$970 million. That means that bridges, hospitals, schools, sewers, could be built in Hamilton, could be built in Orléans, could be built in Ajax—Ajax needs the sewers. Instead, the people in Ajax have to subsidize the people in the rest of the province. That's not right; it's not fair. The Premier's saying that.

Again, this is an unprecedented time. That's why it's important for us to look at and listen to new ideas. I thank the member from East York and the member from Brockville, the Leader of the Opposition, for some ideas. We need to have ideas, and I know the Premier is open to the ideas. But we also have to be pragmatic in understanding that we cannot do it alone. If our cities are to be

solvent and our cities are to be economic hubs, as they have been, we need to work this thing out. There's going to be no magic bullet. There's going to be no simple solution.

I'm sure what we are going through right now at Queen's Park is happening in every elected democratic Legislature in the western world. France is in recession. Italy is in recession. Iceland is on the verge of total bankruptcy. I don't have to mention what's happening in the United States. In the United States, they still don't even have basic health care.

We said that we are going to commit to the basic services and try to do our best. We won't be able to give everything to everybody, but our health care, our education, our policing, helping the poor—we're going to do our darnedest to keep those programs in place, because that's what Ontario's good at. We're going to try to be better, but there's a lot of work to do, folks.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. This House is adjourned until 9 a.m. of the clock on Thursday, October 9.

The House adjourned at 1743.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
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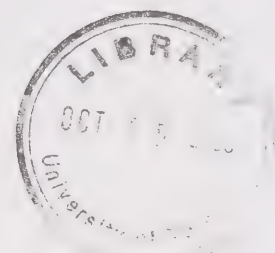
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Première session, 39^e législature

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Thursday 9 October 2008

Jeudi 9 octobre 2008

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Honourable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 9 October 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 9 octobre 2008

The House met at 0900.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer and the Buddhist prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 8, 2008, on the amendment to the amendment to the motion by Mr. McGuinty to acknowledge the economic challenges facing the province and continuing to implement an economic plan.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: It is with some considerable degree of caution that I begin my remarks this morning, hoping that the thoughts I will express to the House and to my constituents in Wellington-Halton Hills will give them reason for confidence and hope, but wondering if they will, such is the magnitude of the economic concern we are facing today in the province of Ontario.

"Let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself...." I begin by quoting the greatest of all 20th-century American Presidents, Franklin Roosevelt, because a well-developed and well-defined sense of history can be a calming guide for us today. We know that today's crisis in the world's financial system originated in the United States. The current situation cries out for effective political leadership, but our American friends will have to wait some three months for new presidential leadership. Let us here in Ontario hope that we will not have to wait some three years for effective political leadership from across the aisle in this House.

The fallout of the disintegrating American economy is being felt here in Ontario, Canada. We feel it in the form of diminished consumer and business confidence, panic selling of shares on the Toronto Stock Exchange, depressing the prices of equities, falling real estate values, factory closures, uncertainty and anxiety. As I said yesterday in this House, my constituents in Wellington-Halton Hills are anxious about losing their retirement savings, their jobs, possibly even their homes. They rightly expect all governments to respond effectively with the strong leadership that these days require. What do we see from the First Minister of the province of On-

tario? A motion before this House which seeks to absolve the government of accountability for any bad economic news which might still be forthcoming and abdicate responsibility for any difficult decisions the government may decide to take and blame them on the Legislature as a whole.

Yesterday, the Premier claimed that he is "open to advice." Well, I have some advice: I feel he should start to listen. In response to the most recent provincial budget, which was tabled in this House on March 25, I responded in a press release. I quote from this press release from March 25: "The economy is slowing down, their overall spending is out of control, they have no margin for error, and their expectations for year-end savings are inflated. I think it's very likely that they won't be able to balance their budget at the end of 2008-09. That means a deficit is a real possibility."

My concern at the time when I read the budget papers that accompanied the budget speech was that the provincial government, having budgeted and planned for a very modest surplus of around \$600 million and indicating expectations for in-year savings that were extremely optimistic—my belief, as I asserted at that time, was that the government may very well have been moving toward a deficit in this fiscal year. At the time I thought we wouldn't know for sure that there was a deficit in the fiscal year 2008-09 until the final accounts were done, but judging by the language in the response from the Minister of Finance as well as the Premier in recent days, it appears that they're aware that we're on track for a deficit, although they haven't yet acknowledged it. Politically, apparently, they don't want to acknowledge it until after the federal election, and then perhaps we'll get a more accurate stating of the finances.

I was reading this morning's Globe and Mail before I came into House. I would call your attention to the article which appeared in the Globe written by Murray Campbell. He talks about this resolution and this debate that we're participating in today. He refers to the resolution that the Premier presented yesterday as being "offensively partisan." He goes on to say, "In effect, he"—the Premier—"is asking the opposition to endorse Liberal economic policy, so it's no surprise that both rival parties say they won't vote for it."

We have offered, through the last five years, constructive and positive suggestions as to what the government should be doing with respect to the province's finances. Most recently, in the lead-up to the provincial budget this spring, the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs conducted its normal round of pre-budget

hearings, and as a member of that committee, along with the member for Haldimand–Norfolk and the member for Niagara West–Glanbrook, I participated in those hearings. We listened to the people of Ontario who had an interest in coming forward to give us their advice and their best suggestions as to what ought to happen in terms of the next provincial budget. I would just like to refer to some of the suggestions that we brought forward as part of our dissenting report on the prebudget consultations.

We pointed out the fact that if current trends at that time were to hold, Ontario was going to be moving toward a have-not status within Confederation. We pointed out the fact that Ontario, under the McGuinty government, had become one of the slowest-growing provinces in the country. We indicated that Ontario's growth in 2007 was the slowest in Canada for the first time since the 1991 recession. We also pointed out the fact that four out of five major banks ranked Ontario ninth out of 10 provinces in terms of economic growth for 2008 in terms of their projections. We indicated that the provincial government should undertake an immediate plan to reduce the tax burden on business and new business investment. We asked the government to fully eliminate capital taxes in Ontario immediately. We asked that the government reduce taxes on small business in particular, because, as you know very well, small business is the greatest generator of job growth in our economy. Over the years, 80% of new job creation tends to be in the small business sector. We called upon the government to begin a serious push to address the very real concerns about future energy supply in Ontario and uncompetitive prices relative to our competing jurisdictions. We urged the government to fix the roads, bridges and waterways on which our trade depends, eliminating once and for all the ballooning infrastructure deficit. Those were some of the points we made.

As our report continued, we quoted Warren Jestin, the chief economist at Scotiabank. His quote was, "Ontario will be, at best, flat and" possibly "on a negative trend with respect to interprovincial migration." That supported the fact that we had put forward that Ontario was in the midst of the biggest out-migration in history. In other words, huge numbers of Ontarians, many thousands, were leaving the province to pursue and seek opportunities in other parts of the country. We offered these suggestions, this advice, in good faith to the provincial government and we were ignored.

0910

My constituents who are listening to this debate today I'm sure are asking a number of questions. One of the questions might be: "Why had the government introduced this motion yesterday, and called it for debate?" Clearly, the government would say that they are responding to the state of Ontario's economy and they're concerned that new action has to be taken to protect and strengthen the economy. Because of the stock market crash, we've seen in the last number of days a dramatic devaluation of the stock markets, both in Canada and Ontario. The TSX has gone down a considerable number of points. The New York Stock Exchange and the

NASDAQ have experienced the same kind of turmoil, as have stock markets around the world. In fact, I've read that almost three years of increases in the stock markets have been wiped out in a number of days.

We have seen a tightening of the financial system in the United States and Europe. We have seen Wall Street investment banks that have weathered all the storms of the last 150 years—even going back to the Civil War—fail and go bankrupt. We've seen massive intervention in the financial system in the United States try and shore it up. Yesterday in Great Britain, the Labour government of Gordon Brown announced that they were going to buy preferred shares in many of the British banks, so as to ensure their solvency and prevent their failure.

We have seen the loss of manufacturing jobs in the province of Ontario—something that I've talked about in this House going back to 2005, calling upon the provincial government to come up with a plan to enhance our competitiveness, to save these jobs and make Ontario a magnet for new job-creating investment. I introduced a private member's resolution in 2005 calling upon the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs to conduct hearings into the competitiveness of our manufacturing industries. Eventually, the resolution was debated and passed by this House. I also had an opportunity to bring a motion to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, asking that we pursue these hearings as soon as possible. That motion was passed. Unfortunately, the government has not seen fit to allow those hearings to take place. I would submit that if those hearings had taken place and if we had had a broad public discussion about the issues facing the competitiveness of our manufacturing industries, involving business leaders, involving academic experts and involving organized labour, we could have, as a standing committee, come up with an action plan which we could have tabled in the House and again encouraged the government to take appropriate action to fix what is wrong in terms of the competitiveness of our industry. I would submit that if we had done that starting in 2005, recognizing the challenges that we knew were on the horizon—or at least that some of us identified, if the government could not or didn't—we could have saved some of those jobs, and we could be in a stronger economic position today as a province.

The government would also point to the anxiety that exists in our communities over declining real estate values. As you know, the Municipal Property Assessment Corp.—or, as we know it, MPAC—has recently sent out notices of reassessment for properties across the province. Over a period of time, I suppose every property owner in Ontario will receive their notice of reassessment. This is something that had been put off by the government until after the election, and now we are looking at about three years of catch-up. Certainly people in my riding are opening these assessment notices, and they are shocked by the increase in MPAC's assessment of the value of their property. They believe—and quite properly believe—that this may very well lead to a whopping property tax increase.

People are also very concerned about the retirement savings. Many of us who have had the opportunity to save for our retirement through the vehicle that Canadians most properly use, the registered retirement savings plan, have investments in the stock market, through mutual funds perhaps. Many of us have investments in bond funds as well, which may very well be of concern. Not everybody puts their retirement funds in the mattress or under the bed or in a sock. The fact is those investments are of concern to people today, and when they receive their statements from their mutual fund companies, I'm sure there is going to be, again, a great deal of shock because of the reduced value of the stock market. For people who have been fortunate enough to have a public sector pension fund like, for example the teachers' pension fund or the Ontario Public Service Employees pension fund, those pension funds are heavily invested in the stock market as well, and they will have experienced massive devaluations as a result of the stock market crash, which of course puts the retirement savings of people, through their pension funds, to some degree in question.

But we also have to point out that the political motive of the government in bringing forward this motion yesterday is to continue its practice of playing a blame game. This government is talented in many ways, and one of its most well-developed talents is to point the finger of blame at anybody and everybody when something goes wrong, rather than accepting government responsibility and accountability for the mistakes they make.

For a number of years, they've put a great deal of effort into blaming the federal government for everything that's wrong in the province of Ontario; in many cases, for things they could have some direct influence over if they took an appropriate change in policy. They've blamed the opposition. When they took office, they blamed the opposition for a deficit that quite frankly wouldn't have existed if we had been re-elected. When you think back to the last year of the Ernie Eves government, in the first quarter we experienced a significant number of economic challenges: SARS, mad cow disease, the hydro blackout. All of that happened within the first few months of that fiscal year, being 2003-04.

Of course, we had a provincial election in October 2003, more than halfway through the fiscal year, when unfortunately the Conservative government was defeated, and the new Liberal government came in and had a political interest in inflating the deficit as high as they possibly could so as to blame the outgoing government for any challenges they were going to face in that first year. Clearly, if we had formed the government again in 2003, we would have tried to balance the budget—I believe we would have. The fact is, the provincial government needs to accept responsibility for at least half of the fiscal year 2003-04 and will have to accept responsibility for inflating that deficit number.

The text of this motion, as we know, says that the government is planning to make adjustments where necessary. We have to question what the government has in mind in that regard. Certainly I listened to the Premier

yesterday. I'm sure there will be other speeches today by government members. We don't know exactly what the government is thinking in terms of making adjustments where necessary. Does that mean higher provincial income taxes at a time when the economy is struggling? Does that mean they're going to run a deficit? Does that mean spending reductions in non-priority areas they might identify that we don't know about yet?

Certainly there are huge expectations out there among interest groups that exist in the province of Ontario. The government spent a lot of time addressing the poverty issue, as they saw fit to do, having promised to do something about it. We don't hear too much about that from the government at the moment. There are a number of other areas, whether it be infrastructure in my riding or new hospitals that need to be built. We just don't know what the government has in mind when it says, "make adjustments as necessary."

The second question my constituents are asking relative to this debate is: What is the government's record on managing the economy? As we know, the government has now been in office for five years. I talked earlier about the deficit they claimed they inherited in 2003, which in fact was grossly inflated to suit the political purposes of the government of the day. We need to talk about the out-of-control spending that the provincial government has pursued in the last five years. Their spending is up 50% in five years, which is something that the Leader of the Opposition pointed out eloquently yesterday. We need to point out the tax increases this government raised—in its very first budget, the biggest tax increase in history—even though the Premier promised not to raise taxes. We need to talk about over 200,000 manufacturing jobs lost, going back to 2005. I talked about that, as well as my resolution in the Legislature that I wish the government had listened to.

The government has, of course, what they call a five-point plan. I find it interesting to observe the Premier during question period when he talks about his five-point plan. He normally makes reference to his notes when he recites the five-point plan. It would appear that he doesn't have the five-point plan in his head.

The five-point plan is in the 2008 budget, the most recent provincial budget. Just quickly, what the government says they're planning to do is a five-point plan to strengthen the economy. The budget says that the government will make investments in the skills and education of our people, the government will accelerate investments in infrastructure, the government will support innovation, the government will lower business costs and the government will strengthen key partnerships to maximize future potential. That's the five-point plan. It's completely motherhood. Any government in the history of Ontario would say they are trying to do all these things. To suggest that this is an effective government strategy or plan to deal with the economy is overstating it in the extreme.

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We know that on October 22 the government will release its fall economic statement. We have been calling

upon the government, going back to June, to bring forward an economic statement with up-to-date and current assumptions for growth, because we know that the growth assumptions that were used in this budget, when it was released in March, are completely out of date and need to be calibrated downwards based on the new realities. It would appear that the government doesn't want to release its economic statement until after the federal election. I assume they don't want to negatively impact on the fortunes of their fellow Liberal candidates who might be in tight races on October 14, next week. Clearly, that would suggest that we are in for some pretty bad news on October 22. It would appear that the government hopes to pass this resolution before the October 22 statement and use it as a pretext and excuse, perhaps, to raise taxes, run a deficit or cut spending.

The third question I believe my constituents are asking with respect to this debate is, where is the leadership that Ontario needs today? The leadership that Ontario needs today is on this side of the House, and I would hope that the government will finally begin to listen, as the Premier indicated that he would. We have called upon the government to bring forward an economic update immediately. We've called upon the government to bring forward a complete financial statement. We've called upon the government to help people who've lost their jobs. We've called upon the government to put out the welcome mat for investment, and address the issues of taxes and regulation. We've called upon the government to bring forward some public sector restraint. And we've called upon the government to work in co-operation with all levels of government. I would urge the government members to listen to what is coming forward in this debate from the opposition parties, because we have been raising these issues now for five years. Listen and learn, and let's work together to address this serious economic situation that we are in.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: I would like to start off by saying that I was very disappointed yesterday. The Premier and his party brought forward their discussion on economics in the province and were looking for input from the opposition party and the third party. We sat listening to his delivery and then, when it came to the opposition's turn, Mr. McGuinty and most of his cabinet left, and also did not even listen to our, the third party's, presentation. So if you want to discuss economics and you want to be concerned about the party, that doesn't show a lot of respect for our opinion. I was very disappointed.

Now, getting into jobs and the economy, this resolution finally acknowledges that Ontario is facing a serious crisis. The McGuinty government has ignored the threat of recession for some time now. Last December, when delivering his fall economic statement, the finance minister said, "The fundamentals of our economy are vital and strong"—December 13, 2007. Then last spring, when the asset-backed commercial paper mess was beginning to unravel and bank economists were lowering

their expectations, the finance minister stated, "The economy is fundamentally strong and resilient"—March 18, 2008. The McGuinty government chose to ignore these looming problems and instead chose to use terms like "resilient" and "fundamentally strong" to get around debating what could be done to reverse the course. Speaking of debating, I don't know why this resolution was brought forward at this time—it might have something to do with an election; I'm not sure—but this should have been done before, not after.

Manufacturing and resource sector workers in this province have been witnessing a recession for years now. They know the economies in their communities have not been "fundamentally strong." There's a jobs crisis in the Ontario manufacturing and forestry heartlands. Since July 2004, almost 230,000 Ontarians in the manufacturing sector have lost their jobs. This list could go on, but here are some examples that are more recent: 430 jobs, 80% of the workforce at DDM Plastics in Tillsonburg. In Niagara last month, 800 jobs lost were at John Deere in Welland and the temporary layoff of 480 at Abitibi-Bowater. Lost, since June 2004, were 100,000 manufacturing jobs in Toronto and 25,000 in Hamilton. Can you imagine the impact on my city, where we're from? That's 25,000 jobs and a population of just under 500,000. Can you imagine how many other people that impacts, as well as small businesses? Thunder Bay's manufacturing jobs: half of them gone. In addition, 230,000 jobs lost in manufacturing; more than 9,000 direct jobs in the forest products industry and about 35,000 indirect jobs have been lost.

I shouldn't have to tell the members opposite how important manufacturing and resource jobs are to this province. These jobs are not just important because manufacturing jobs pay an average of \$2.50 per hour more than an average hourly wage in this province. These jobs are not just important because, in addition to paying better, these jobs come with good pensions and good benefits. Workers who have lost good jobs over the past few years would be stunned to know that it is only now that the McGuinty government is proposing a resolution acknowledging that the province faces significant economic challenges. It's shocking, frankly, that it has taken the McGuinty government so long to come to this conclusion. Dalton McGuinty has pretended that the current jobs crisis is limited only to manufacturing and forestry, but anyone who knows anything about the Ontario economy knows that manufacturing and resources represent the foundation upon which Ontario's service economy rests.

The second quarter economic accounts released by the Minister of Finance last week showed that the output for the manufacturing sector continues to decline. But the real news is that when you combine reports from the first two quarters of this year, it becomes clear that the rest of the economy is no longer picking up the slack, and we are ending up with declining output in many sectors of the broader economy. In other words, job losses in previously untouched sectors—retail and financial services,

for example—may very well be on the immediate horizon.

The TD Economics report yesterday forecasts a negative employment growth in 2009. The report reads: “Real GDP growth in Ontario is expected to barely advance in 2008-09, placing it last”—last, Speaker—“amongst its peers. The lagging nature of employment in reflecting economic conditions leaves significant downside risks to the job market, especially since the manufacturing sector is expected to continue to bleed jobs and this will disproportionately hit this province” hard.

The McGuinty government has heard from unemployed workers, seen the bad statistics and read report after report forecasting job losses, and they now acknowledge that trouble is on the horizon. So what do they do about it? They table a resolution reaffirming that their so-called five-point plan is working. Confusing, to say the least. When confronted with real evidence that the plan isn't, in fact, working, the McGuinty government's strategy is to proclaim in this House that it actually is working—220,000 manufacturing jobs lost in five years. The plan is working, they say. The forestry sector decline is wiping out towns in northern Ontario. It's working, they say, the plan is working. Reports showing falling growth and serious job losses looming in all sectors? The plan is working? I'm not sure.

This resolution is a declaration of inaction. The NDP has always been the party that puts families first. We believe in a good job for everyone, because a job is the best way to make sure that working women and men share in Ontario's prosperity. The NDP believes that government has to play an active role in protecting good-paying jobs, and when those jobs can't be saved, making sure that workers who have committed a lifetime to an employer are treated fairly and are given every opportunity to return to the labour force in comparable jobs, and not be retrained to go work in Alberta or Saskatchewan.

The McGuinty government doesn't believe in an activist government. Mr. McGuinty has stood on the sidelines showing absolutely no leadership, while factories and mills downsize and close all over our province, costing hundreds of thousands of jobs. I repeat: 230,000 manufacturing jobs and tens of thousands of jobs in the forestry sector.

Dalton McGuinty's watch has not been good, quite frankly. The Liberals think that the market must always be the final arbiter of what jobs survive and what jobs disappear. Well, I'm here to tell you that the NDP doesn't see things that way.

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We believe that sometimes the market works and sometimes it doesn't. When it doesn't—and this is one of those times in Ontario's economic history when the market definitely isn't working—the government must step in on behalf of hard-working men and women and set things right. There are fundamental changes in the economy taking place that require innovative, activist government action now. Instead of putting real proposals on the

table, the McGuinty government tables a resolution in this House saying he isn't prepared to act to protect jobs in this province. He says that his five-point plan will support Ontario workers through the gloomy economic forecasts we hear about every day. But this five-point plan has failed to sustain manufacturing and resource jobs, so it sure won't do a thing to sustain jobs in other sectors that may get hit.

Contrary to Mr. McGuinty's do-nothing approach, the NDP has been putting real policies on the table for the past couple of years. Here's what we've been fighting for:

- a five-year guarantee of the industrial hydro rate;
- a jobs protection commissioner to help at-risk companies overcome financial difficulties;
- a Buy Ontario policy;
- tougher plant closure legislation that could ensure that everything is done to prevent a profitable plant or mill from closing in addition and enhanced mandate severances. Bill 6, which I brought forward last year, is still sitting on the books. It was passed for show on second reading in the House, it got to committee and the Liberals shot it down. Not only did they shoot it down, they didn't even read it—unbelievable;
- expansion of severance eligibility and increase of advance notice in mass-layoff situations;
- pension and wage protection that would make sure that workers get every penny they are owed from their employer when they close or leave the country, including not only severance, but holiday pay and money owed for hours worked; and finally,
- the refundable manufacturing resource investment tax, which seems to have worked well in Manitoba. Yes, their economy is slightly different, but it seems to be having a major impact on saving jobs.

These are just some of the constructive ideas we've put forward in the past few years to deal with Ontario's job crisis and every last one of them has been rejected.

I'd like to move an amendment to this resolution calling on the government to adopt this proposal—we've already done that; sorry. I will give another chance for the government to accept it.

For the New Democrats, politics is about people. It's about a fair deal for the people who have built and continue to build this province. It's heart-wrenching to attend union meetings across this province where proud, strong, middle-aged workers break down while telling their story of how their jobs were lost, how they can't pay their mortgage, can't put food on the table, are facing bleak futures and few job possibilities, and can't send their kids to college or university. Not only are these families facing a loss of income due to job loss, but to add insult to injury, there is no protection to their severances, benefits and hard-earned pension plans. If we want to talk about the real causes of poverty in this province, let's look at the manufacturing and resource job losses in the province and the poor treatment of workers in their time of need. They spent a lifetime paying their taxes and helped build their community and their province, but

when they needed help, the government was nowhere to be seen. That's not right, it's not fair, and I can guarantee you that the NDP caucus at Queen's Park will do everything we can to make sure that working men and women of this province are fairly rewarded for their hard work and put as much pressure on the folks across the way as possible to ensure that provincial government is there to lend a helping hand when Ontarians need it.

This is even more important when facing a job crisis that in all likelihood will extend to other sectors of our economy. Seventeen years ago, the Legislature was debating what the government should do, faced with a deep recession. Here is one quote from that debate: "This House heard the disturbing news from the treasury yesterday regarding our province's economy and the devastating impact the recession is having on employment...."

"I urge this government, I implore this government to develop and implement a program immediately to address the very real and specific needs of those affected by loss of employment." That was Dalton McGuinty, March 19, 1991.

The financial crisis and regulation: Ontarians are looking at the stock market with a sense of angst. Yes, stock markets go up and down, but this is different. It seems that every day, the world central banks take extraordinary actions to prevent our financial system from completely collapsing. The Federal Reserve and the Bank of Canada have been pouring dollars into the banking system to keep it afloat. The United States and the European countries have committed hundreds of billions, perhaps trillions, of dollars to nationalize financial institutions in a desperate attempt to turn things around. The stock market swings—wild, unpredictable and seemingly irrational—worry people. Ontarians' savings are tied up in the stock market, pensions, mutual funds, RRSPs and so on. Ontarians are worried about their financial future and want their savings protected from these wild swings.

They are also concerned about their jobs. Stock market crashes and job losses tend to go hand in hand. We've already seen 230,000 jobs leave this province in the last five years, but Ontarians are concerned that the worst is yet to come. The financial and retail sectors have so far been left relatively unscathed by lower growth. In the United States, this hasn't been the case; retailers and banks are laying off workers all over the country. When Ontarians look to newspapers and television for reasons why the stock market has been acting this way, they are inundated with terms like "asset-backed commercial paper," "toxic mortgages" and "default credit swaps." It's a complicated problem, but all signs point to a lack of regulation and oversight that allows speculators to take excessive risks, and every day, taxpayers and citizens are paying the consequences of their bad bets.

Ontario has jurisdiction over securities regulation. We have argued through the debate that Ontario needs to take a more active approach in protecting and sustaining jobs in our province. But Ontario also needs to take immediate steps to strengthen securities regulation. We need to prevent this from happening again. We'd like to offer some real solutions on security reform:

—The creation of a financial products safety commission just like we have for consumer goods, as recommended by one prominent economist, would address the invention of new financial products not intended to manage risk but to create risk.

—Ensure that regulators oversee areas of finance that are now unregulated; to quote another financial expert, "If it quacks like a bank, regulate it like a bank." This includes real regulation of hedge funds and large pools of capital that are able to manipulate markets for quick profits.

—Strengthen regulation that restricts leverage for all financial companies. Leverage is the proportion of debt used in speculation and is one of the causes of the current crisis.

—Deal with the conflicts of interest that are so much a part of our securities regulation system. Organizations that regulate the mutual fund and investment dealer sectors police themselves while also acting as a trade association and promoting themselves. This is a clear conflict of interest, and that simply has to stop now.

Obviously, these are just a few proposals, and we look forward to hearing more from the province and the Ontario Securities Commission. But we need to act now to protect Ontario's savings from more wild swings and the jobs impacted by financial markets.

I can only speak from my experience in the city of Hamilton, and I can tell you that in the last 20 years, I've seen probably 50 to 60 major employers pull out of the Hamilton region and go back to the States, to Europe, to Mexico, to South America, throwing thousands and thousands of Hamiltonians out of work—good-paying jobs, anywhere from \$40,000 to \$70,000 jobs, which are above average but sure stimulated our economy. If you drive down Barton Street in Hamilton, it's like a ghost town. Every second store is closed or boarded up. I remember the days when it was a booming area—cars, people, shoppers. Not now. And where are all our young people going? They're going west, where the money is, where the good money is, or to the oil rigs off Newfoundland.

When are we going to start attracting major manufacturers to our province? That's the problem. We can diversify, we can put money into education, we can put money into retraining, but if they don't have a job to go to, they're going to go elsewhere. So we're going to pay taxpayers' money to train these guys in trades and crafts and train doctors and nurses, and they're going to go to other provinces. They're constantly courted by the United States; they come here and offer them houses, offer them packages to go south. We probably lose 30% of our doctors and nurses to the United States.

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I just don't understand. We're sinking all this money into the Big Three, we're sinking all this money into all these other areas, yet they keep laying people off, taking the money, and we don't see any results. I can only speak for my area, but not one major manufacturing company has come back to Hamilton. I could go down a list: Otis Elevator, CIL, Massey Ferguson, Procter and Gamble,

Inglis, Westinghouse—it goes on and on. We're talking thousands of jobs.

Our tax base in the Hamilton area used to be 70% industrial, 30% residential. It's now 70% residential, 30% industrial. So what happens? It's hard to believe when a hard-hit community like Hamilton and area pays some of the highest residential taxes in this province. Unbelievable—and half of our people are out of work. Our seniors are on fixed incomes. It's just unacceptable. It's got to change. This government should be moving in the direction of attracting major businesses to the hard-hit communities in our province, not always bolstering the communities that are reasonably well and can survive. Believe me, Ontario is west of Burlington. There is another part of this province that's been ignored. We've got to move.

The government has put money into health in Hamilton, but that doesn't give John Smith, the truck driver, a job. It gives researchers, nurses and doctors employment, but the bulk of our population is not being dealt with.

It's got to change. It's got to change fast or everything is going to get worse. I'm very, very concerned about our economy and the future of this province. Hopefully, the government sometime will listen to the opposition.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Hon. George Smitherman: It's a real privilege for me to have a chance to participate in the debate over this resolution and indeed in the debate over a matter which is first and foremost for all of us in our considerations. These are challenging times, to say the least.

I must say really appreciate the privilege in this House today of following on the comments by the honourable member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. I really enjoy his presence in this Legislature and his passion for his community. But I do wonder slightly, and I'll wonder aloud, whether his passion with which he concluded his remarks around the desire to see manufacturers return to the Hamilton community, take root there and provide economic opportunity for individuals to support their families, and for that community, which I have a long association with, to prosper—how he feels, in the context of the current federal election campaign, about a \$50-billion tax increase for these very same corporations that the member wants to see setting up in Hamilton. I'm not sure how he rationalizes that in the context of the party which I know he supports, taking the view at the federal election that they would put about \$50 billion in additional tax burdens on those very same corporations. I don't think, somehow, that's going to be the path to the success that we all dream about for Hamilton.

I must say I was a little bit surprised by some of the honourable members' comments about Hamilton that don't really reflect the optimistic viewpoint I've experienced in my visits to the Hamilton community, in my engagement with people there. The honourable member did acknowledge that there's been very substantial investment in the Hamilton community. No doubt, the nature of the investment and the nature of the job growth

that has occurred in Hamilton is different than in some of Hamilton's history, but I really look to Hamilton as a community that continues to emerge, built on the strengths of research capability at McMaster University and extraordinary investments, which are reflected in construction crane—very, very evident in the Hamilton community—about the continued emergence of the health sciences sector.

I will speak a little bit later on to some of those very direct infrastructure investments that are helping to fuel the economic prospects and, indeed, to provide an optimistic viewpoint for the future of the Hamilton community. I think in a certain sense it's appropriate to use Hamilton as a community symbolic of the exercise that we're engaged in here in the province to transition to the jobs of the future. Health sciences is one of these very good examples, and it's an example where there has been very important and evident progress in the Hamilton community.

This debate that legislators will take up here is a crucial one, for it is also a sign to the people of Ontario that, as they do, we have our eye firmly fixed on the economic circumstances and we share in this struggle with all Ontarians. It is a time of some great uncertainty, and it is a time, therefore, that calls upon government to act in a proactive way, to set a vision and a destination point and to courageously lead our province in that direction.

I understand, having served as an opposition member, how it's important and a part of the responsibility to put on the record those concerns—

Interjection.

Hon. George Smitherman: The member for Durham is doing what he does well, which is muttering under his breath.

I think that there is importance in this debate in terms of being able to characterize for the people of Ontario those efforts that we're making.

I listened carefully yesterday to the Leader of the Opposition—that is, the Leader of the Opposition in the Legislature, as the opposition party does not have a leader who has a seat in the Legislature—the member for Leeds—

Interjections.

Hon. George Smitherman: I think one of the members just offered to step aside to make way for Mr. Tory.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Was it you?

Hon. George Smitherman: If I heard the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock properly, she's going to step aside and allow a by-election to occur so that Mr. Tory could visit himself in this Legislature. He once had a seat here. I'm not sure what happened.

We set out on a path, recognizing the importance of setting that destination in mind for the economy of the province of Ontario. We've been working to cut business taxes. We eliminated capital taxes for manufacturers and resource-based industries. Some members in this House who call for action related to manufacturing and resource-based industries voted against those tax decreases. We cut capital taxes for businesses by 21%, and we made it

retroactive, which meant that they got cheques back, and there is further action in that area.

Infrastructure is the second of a five-pronged strategy to advance the economic prospects for Ontario—economic prospects in the short term in terms of the 100,000 or so people who are actively working in Ontario today on rebuilding and addressing the infrastructure deficit that has plagued our province, but also making investments in the infrastructure of our province, which is about the foundation of our province to be successful going forward. I want to talk more about infrastructure. I'll leave those comments to just a few minutes from now.

A third in our strategy was to support innovation. Obviously, there is an extraordinary evolution going on in a wide variety of areas—in my responsibilities as Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, thinking of the energy side, the emergence of more green technologies does provide a glimpse into the extraordinary array of opportunities there are for the ingenious minds of the people of the province of Ontario—the best-educated workforce in the western world—to apply themselves and to create the devices and the products and the services which will be in very strong demand over the course of the next several decades, particularly as we grapple with the challenges and the opportunities related to climate change.

Those investments have supported things like new laboratories, equipment and research; they've created a venture capital fund to help support some of the capital needs of those companies that are creating the high-quality and high-paying jobs of the present and of the future; and also, resources put aside to support the biopharm investment program to attract new pharmaceutical investment in the province of Ontario. Indeed, I had the privilege of attending at one of the ground-breakings for an impressive new facility, actually here in the city of Toronto, at one of the long-standing players, Sanofi, known to many as Connaught Labs, at the heart of some of the most important health sciences history that our country knows, and a company deeply connected to research that has in its pipeline the capacity to affect quality of life for a lot of people out there.

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This ties in well to our fourth strategy, which is partnering with business. You know, it's one thing to come to a Legislature and to talk about the necessity of investment in the manufacturing sector, as the member who spoke before me did. But he's from a party that's supporting a \$50-billion tax increase for businesses and he is also from a party that doesn't consistently demonstrate their capacity to actually be engaged, to create partnerships and to be mindful of the necessity of working with those who are prepared to make investments and to bring employment.

We have a different strategy. Our auto strategy has invested about \$500 million and leveraged \$8 billion in new private sector investments. We all recognize that here in the province of Ontario we have a very proud history, and a very proud and strong future as well, with

respect to the auto manufacturing sector. That's not to say, and certainly not to pretend, that there aren't challenges which have been experienced by many of the people who work in that sector. But at the same time we must be mindful of the opportunities to ensure, on a go-forward basis, that the people in the province of Ontario have the opportunity to continue to participate in what will always be a very big piece of the Ontario economy. We're very excited, and I'll be going to the community of Woodstock soon to participate with them in the groundbreaking for their new hospital. We're very excited to see coming to life the Toyota plant, which is a very tangible piece of demonstrable progress and a very good sign of how investing some of the people's resource is able to lure these very important investments.

Our advanced manufacturing investment strategy and our Next Generation of Jobs Fund are further examples of our willingness to partner with business, to give them the support and the resources that they need to ensure that the employees that they have for today are appropriately trained for the jobs and the opportunities of tomorrow. I just want to tell you that on this point about partnering, we have seen derisive comment, I think it's fair to say, from each of the opposition parties around these strategies. We have seen the Conservative Party evolve over time from the corporate welfare comments propagated very often by the former member for Whitby, who now serves—perhaps just for a few days longer—as a member of Parliament and as the Minister of Finance in the country of Canada, the same individual who has been noteworthy for his active campaigning against the province that he is deemed to represent in the House of Commons.

At the heart of it, our fifth strategy is the one that has always been at the strength of Ontario, and that is to invest in our people. I mentioned before that we have extraordinary bragging rights insofar as the workforce. The people of the province of Ontario are the best educated to be found anywhere in the western world. We want to make sure that their skills are sharp. We've made extraordinary progress in bringing more opportunities to the fore through the investments that we've made in our post-secondary education sector. I think that of all the things we can point to through the initiatives that our government has led over the last five years, one of those killer facts, one of those things most noteworthy: The people of the province of Ontario should know that investments in the post-secondary education system, in our colleges and in our universities, mean that today there are 100,000 more individuals participating in post-secondary education opportunities than five years ago. This is 100,000 more people getting the skills that they need to ensure that Ontario will be in a competitive position going forward. We've got 10,000 more individuals, through the efforts that we've made in enhancing the quality of our high schools, graduating from high school. This is a further example of the steps that we're taking to allow people to ladder up, to have a good foundation in education, to go back for retraining as necessary, to con-

tinue to enhance their skill set and see those skills evolve as our economy evolves and the nature of employment evolves.

We've got 50,000 more apprentices working. We've had some questions in the Legislature from the johnny-come-lately school of politics, from the official opposition, on the matter of apprenticeship, but where were they through the period of time, for eight and a half years, when they were the government, in preparing Ontario for what they now say were evident transition-area matters going on in our economy? Why did they not have the foresight through those many years, when the predictions of an aging workforce were first out there? Why did they sleep through those opportunities? Instead of investing in post-secondary education and in apprenticeship models, they chose to go with a strategy of tax cuts, and in 2003-04 they left us holding the bag for their irresponsible actions and a more than \$5.5-billion deficit to boot.

Our strategy is clear: It's investing in the people of the province of Ontario.

I want to return to the subject matter that I have lots of responsibility for and is near and dear to my heart, and that's infrastructure.

The first thing I want to do is apologize to the people who are at home and who, over the course of the last several months, in their travels here, there and everywhere in the province of Ontario, have experienced some of the delays from traffic associated with road and bridge construction. I have many privileges associated with my job, and the greatest one, the one that I enjoy the most, is the privilege of travelling about this vast and beautiful province of ours. My travels last weekend took me to Sudbury for some family business; I married into Sudbury. I drove up Highway 400/69 to Sudbury. Five weeks ago I had done the same trip, and in the time since, yet even more impressive road building and preparation for the next phases of road building are evident there, as we shrink the province of Ontario through enhancements to our transportation system and provide the people in northern Ontario with more connections to the communities in the south. This is one very, very strong example.

As I travelled around here in Toronto, or as I travelled earlier in the summer from my mother's farm in Ravenna in eastern Grey county down to Windsor, I came upon so many places where local detours were necessary because our government has made investments in infrastructure which allow counties and municipalities to rebuild bridges which were otherwise threatened. Yet we receive only criticism from the opposition party, particularly the official opposition. They didn't want to see the more than \$1-billion investments in communities. They characterize that spending as reckless. We characterize that spending as essential to make sure that the essential infrastructure of the province of Ontario is there. We want to get past the neglect that has created infrastructure deficits totalling \$100 billion, and we have been working with a very different approach than the party that came before us.

I had the privilege of serving as Minister of Health for more than four and a half years in the province of On-

tario. Unlike the ministers from the previous government—including you, I might say, in deference to you, Mr. Speaker—I was very lucky because I was part of a government that wasn't intent on closing hospitals, but instead was intent on building them.

Interjection.

Hon. George Smitherman: I'm being heckled again by the member from Durham, but if he was more gregarious, outgoing, and optimistic, he would stand in his place and acknowledge a new regional cancer centre which has come to life in Oshawa through investment by our government. He would acknowledge that as we stand here today, in the community of Ajax there is a hospital undergoing a \$100-million renovation that was necessary when his party was in office, but instead they dedicated themselves to other tasks, not the essential tasks of building the infrastructure that's necessary.

This year in the province of Ontario, we're spending just about \$10 billion to build up the infrastructure. This is in comparison to not many years ago, when the official opposition was the government, when infrastructure investments were a small percentage of the kinds of investments that we've been making to build back the infrastructure to support the economic profile of the province of Ontario.

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I know that we'll have viewers who have tuned in from a variety of different places in the province, and I want to highlight, just on hospitals alone—keeping in mind that we've got transit, we've got schools, we've got post-secondary education, we've got road building and bridges also going on—what is happening in real time, as we speak:

—Credit Valley Hospital: 270,000 square feet of new construction and 70,000 square feet of renovations; more hospital beds, and double the number of labour and delivery rooms; expanded cancer treatment centre and increased diagnostic services.

—Hamilton General Hospital, which I spoke about earlier: Consolidate the current acquired brain injury and rehab services from 14 different buildings to one site; 44 beds and more efficient ambulatory programs.

—Up on the brow of the mountain in Hamilton, Henderson General Hospital, a hospital slated for closure by the previous government, is undergoing an extraordinary renovation. The construction cranes can be seen for miles and miles. We're adding oncology and critical care beds, providing more capacity in emergency services. I think that emergency room was threatened with closure by the previous government. Instead, we're putting a lot of the people's money into rebuilding their necessary infrastructure.

—In Ottawa, the Hôpital Montfort is doubled in size and will be officially opened very soon. I had a chance to visit there not long ago to tell them that we were going to bring a new MRI to that site. This is another example in our Ontario where the McGuinty government is investing the people's resources in building up their infrastructure in an instance where the previous government intended to close it.

—North Bay Regional Health Centre: huge new hospital. Mike Harris couldn't deliver a new hospital in North Bay. Monique Smith delivered a new hospital in North Bay and a new hospital in Mattawa, the opening of which I'm looking forward to participating in on October 25.

—The Ottawa Hospital's regional cancer centre program, on two sites—new cancer capacity coming to life in Ottawa.

—Rouge Valley, Ajax and Pickering I mentioned before; yesterday, Runnymede Healthcare Centre—they topped off the new building. In Sarnia, Bluewater Health: a big, beautiful new hospital; same thing in Sault Ste. Marie. I saw it recently from the air and it is magnificent. Sudbury Regional Hospital, Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, Trillium Health Centre Mississauga, Trillium Health Centre West Toronto—all of these examples of infrastructure investment, jobs for Ontario in building Ontario's future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to start by saying we're actually in government order number 11, and we are basically debating the amendment to the amendment. That's Mr. Prue's amendment to Mr. Runciman's amendment from the notice we debated yesterday, which is notice number 87. That's where Premier McGuinty started off by a self-congratulatory style of saying, "It's not our fault."

In fairness, I have to respect our House leader, Mr. Runciman from Leeds-Grenville. I think his tone yesterday was absolutely perfect. He talked about working in co-operation, in a conciliatory fashion, but he also pointed out the hypocrisy of the tone of the government's secret, last-minute putting of this on the government agenda with no consultation, and also accusing the opposition of not working in co-operation. If you read or pay attention to the remarks by Mr. Runciman, you would, I believe, in a non-partisan way, be impressed. I can tell you, after 10 or so years of being here and listening, he was extending what I definitely consider an olive branch in terms of trying to show some recognition for the families, those persons on fixed incomes, those persons with pensions, those people who are affected by this. I think there's something for all of us to learn on this. It's more than just the tone, I agree; it's also a lesson that we should learn—putting the people first—because they are the people who actually put us here to talk about it.

I think it's important also to put some wrapping around this, in the context of the government. It's kind of strange—I start the framing of my comments around a broader tone. The notice of motion by Premier McGuinty said, and I think it would be important to put that on the record: "I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario acknowledges our province is facing economic challenges created by the high dollar"—in other words, it's not his fault—"high international oil prices"—not our fault—"the US economic slowdown"—not our fault—

"international economic turmoil"—not our fault—"and increased global manufacturing competition from China and India especially"—not our fault. He goes on to really say that none of it is his fault. Well, what else is he doing? What has he done to encourage, stimulate or help the economy of Ontario if he can't take responsibility for this situation—and in fairness, Mr. Runciman said that he shouldn't, which in fact is the case; this is global. But the cynicism of it all is, why was this motion at the last minute brought in? Basically, it was to bump up the current election on Tuesday. The federal election is now framed around—the ballot question is the economy, and he's trying to blame Stephen Harper. That's what this is about. To be totally honest in how cynical you can be here, he brought this in at the 11th hour on the 11th day in the heat of night and the darkness of night, sprung it on the opposition, and the main issue was, it's not his fault; it's Stephen Harper's fault. Here we have an election federally coming next week, on the 14th. It's tragic.

I hate to sound cynical, but it's even more cynical when you look at the broader context of what this government does. Just on October 7, there was a government bill introduced by the Attorney General, the Honourable Chris Bentley. The bill is number 108, and it's called An Act respecting apologies. It's quite an interesting bill. In fact, I've talked to a couple of lawyers about, what does it mean for liability—not just for the medical community, but what does it mean for liability? What has this got to do with the motion we're debating? I'm going to read the explanatory note. It says: "The bill provides that an apology made by or on behalf of a person in relation to any matter does not constitute an admission of fault or liability by the person, except for the purposes of a proceeding under the Provincial Offences Act, and does not affect the insurance coverage available to any person.... The bill also provides that an apology is not admissible in any civil proceeding, administrative proceeding"—in other words, "We're sorry, but we're not going to do anything about it."

In fact, he could have started the speech yesterday by introducing or referring to this bill: "I'm sorry." What does Premier McGuinty have to be sorry about? Well, he could apologize for the number of bold-faced mistruths that he stated during the last two elections. One of them was the highest increase in taxes in Canadian history, the health tax, \$2.5 billion, about \$800 or more out of every single person's pocket. He said it was a health tax. Well, he may tell you it's a health tax, but have you got a doctor? Is your health care any better? We're paying more, but we're getting less.

But it's more straightforward than that. I suggest he should have used his mandate as the Premier of the province to exercise Bill 108 and apologize to the people of Ontario, apologize for the cynicism of trying to blame everything on the federal level of government and taking no responsibility for his inaction—in fact, his actions of creating more red tape, more regulations, more inspections and more tax burdens on the hard-working families of Ontario. And it's worse: The seniors are paralyzed.

Many people in my riding are very, very concerned about a number of things—the price of gasoline. They're also concerned about their electricity. This morning, I turned on the radio and what they were talking about was natural gas. All of this stuff is under the whim and the will of Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Energy Board. He has some authority; he has some authority to protect people on fixed incomes who can't and will not be able to afford their heat for their home this coming winter. I can't believe it for the life of me. He actually went around and put in smart meters. He put smart meters in every home. Now, they're not really smart meters at all. What they are, for your electricity, are time-of-use meters. Then he subtly introduced some changes in the regulations of how you're going to pay for electricity. Electricity is going to cost you about 100% more if you use it at peak times of the day. The smart meter is a device that allows your utility to bill you at your home for the energy that you used at a particular time of the day. Now that they have the differentiated prices, if you use electricity at the high point of use, you'll pay about 11 cents a kilowatt hour, as opposed to 4 to 5 cents a kilowatt-hour. That's a 100% increase. Not only that; you're going to be paying for the smart meter itself. That's just one more example. We've got the health tax, and then we've got the whole idea of energy and the costs.

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With the economic climate, he says he has no tools to deal with the threat to our seniors' pensions and other capital accumulation mechanisms, one of which, of course, is pension accounts. It's a huge, huge issue, Mr. Speaker—or Madam Speaker; good to see you in the chair. That, to me, is getting down to—because I'm over 65 and I play close attention to these things. I can see in my own accounts that I have lost a considerable amount. I think of people who haven't had the privilege that I've had of a decent, secure job—General Motors, 30 years, as well as this job for over 10 years. I have accumulated money, primarily for my own future. I feel each of us should have a responsibility to do the best we can, without always depending on government to bail us out.

But there is a role for government. Don't tell me that he can't make changes. I know for a fact he can. He has been warned by myself and others. There's a very excellent report that some members may not have had the chance—or the interest, perhaps—to read. It's called the Wise Persons' report. That report is by a very well respected and recognized group of individuals. One of the people whom I've had the privilege of meeting and hearing is one of the most respected people on this issue in the financial industry. It's Purdy Crawford, and I think he chairs the Wise Persons' Committee. They have reported on the tools under the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, FSCO, as well as the OSC, the Ontario Securities Commission, and the rules they make on securing pensions.

I can tell you that not too many people are paying attention, but those funds worldwide—you should know

this; I'm not making this up. On the pension side, it's so large that no one wants to talk about it. It's terrifying, actually. It's about \$4 trillion. It's huge. It's not some mortgage that failed. This is accumulated capital that sits in investments, longer-term, mostly bank stocks. How are bank stocks doing? They're down 50%, some of them.

In fact, the bailout, the \$700 billion in the United States.... I was just recently in Ireland. Their bailout for their banks is \$400 billion, and their population is smaller than Canada's—\$400 billion to bail out the Irish banks. Why? We think Ireland's so well off, but I could cite a few things.

Where would this money be? Real estate is usually a pretty civil investment. How about a pension fund that invests in a REIT or some other instrument in real estate, and that market goes south? The capital value of those one-time-secure assets has gone down. I can tell you, the market, the equity market itself, has gone down. Even the resource market has gone down.

My sense is this: A Premier who stands up as a leader, as Mr. Runciman outlined yesterday, at the very least should have been honest with the people of Ontario. The first thing he could have done, Mr. Speaker—I see you're back—is give us, as Mr. Runciman asked for, a financial update. Most countries in the world—I know that in Great Britain, they're doing it on October 14. Ontario's going to do it on the 22nd, I believe. They should have brought that forward, in all honesty, in an atmosphere of collegiality and co-operation.

I believe, just reading the tone of our leader, John Tory, and our House leader, Mr. Runciman, that we would have a steady hand on the tiller and we would take some responsibility. At least we would take some partnership with you to do the right things. And Mr. Runciman—what we're debating in this government motion number 11 are his recommendations, which came out of public consultations that our leader, John Tory, and Mr. Runciman and the rest of caucus had with the sectors within our economy, the leadership in our economy. This included union, management, and labour and manufacturing leaders.

I have some clippings from this. Judith Andrew and others from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business—small businesses, as we know, are very important. What are they saying? The two most important things they're saying: overtaxed and overregulated red tape. I can tell you that there's no quick fix. This is a third party, whose mandate is to represent small business: family restaurants, family small manufacturing businesses, family cleaning businesses, lawn service businesses, kennels, hairdressing shops, all these various things; families paying their bills, paying the inordinate expense of electricity bills. This, at the end of day, in all due respect, Mr. Premier, is about people. This is about our constituents, our collective constituents, and it's time to extend a hand to Mr. Runciman, as well as the NDP—Mr. Hampton—and take some responsibility in this climate.

Just recently, I spent some time, as I said, in two or three other countries, and I'm looking at a book here. I'm

just going to read some of the titles, with your indulgence, Mr. Speaker. Don't become confused. These are from other countries and it really does tell you a lot about how similar the real functions are. I'm running out of time. This is a statement here. The title is—and I'm going to validate this shortly—"Facing Into a Dismal Vista"—this is the Business and Finance publication—"Assurances our banks are robust does not so much inspire confidence as indicate the looming terror yet to stalk economic lives." The writer is the former senior government adviser in the British government.

Another headline in the same publication—it's all over Europe. This has nothing to do with Stephen Harper. In fact, the Canadian economy, in the overall scheme, globally, wouldn't be 5% of the total equation; it wouldn't be that big. Our economy is so linked to the United States; 80% of our total manufacturing economy is linked to the United States and if they catch a cold, we get pneumonia. So let's not be dissuaded in the election. Who would you sooner have their hand on the tiller? Stéphane Dion, who's going to increase taxes, or Stephen Harper, who's going to steady as she goes? That's what the question should be about, and Mr. Harper should have a strong minority government and have to work cooperatively in these troubled times. I would be satisfied with that outcome, but to swing right over and bring in another taxing-and-spending Liberal—I don't think so. That's not on the question. Read what's happening in the global economy.

If you look at the Prime Minister of England, he's a Labour Prime Minister and he's acting like a Conservative. They're looking to them for leadership. In fact, David Cameron, the upcoming Conservative leader in England, will be the next Prime Minister, I can tell you for sure. He's very popular. They've all had their annual general reviews and that's the way it sounds over there.

The next headline is, "Walk the Key Economic Planks
"Alan Dukes examines Ireland's myriad muscles and Achilles heels and concludes we have little cause to feel secure."

It goes on to outline how vulnerable the Irish economy is, the Celtic economy. The Celtic tiger is in huge, huge trouble—big time. All their expansion and growth is financed on the backs of these funds I talked about, which have all gone south.

I'm just reading these out. This is another one. This is a good example, and you should follow the money in these things is the advice from Stephen Harper. Lloyds TSB created the United Kingdom's biggest bank with the HBOS takeover. That's the Scottish bank that was taken over by Lloyds. The next title here is: "Bank of America Set to Buy Merrill Lynch for \$50 billion"—large, unimaginable sums of money and consolidation of money. Why? Because their capital base is completely gone, their capital base being what they considered to be their securities to secure their loans, the securities being the houses that they hold the mortgages on. Maybe a \$300,000 mortgage is now worth \$150,000. So if you put that across all of the condos and apartments and commercial buildings, they're in huge trouble.

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I'm going on here. I am trying to relate this to what this debate is about. The last one is the big bailout. This is about the US \$700-billion guarantee to the banks. And another one here is a very interesting sector. I'm going to wrap up by saying this. It says: "Public Sector: Insult to Injury. The new social partnership agreement further cossets state employees at the expense of the private sector," and it goes on to say the public sector will bankrupt the British economy. I'm not making this stuff up. It goes on to say that they have to cut almost €2 billion in expenses—€2 billion, a lot of money. Where should they start cutting? They start talking about health care. Let's relate this back to Ontario.

Mr. McGuinty led us to believe that he has no choice. He said the economy is in trouble. We all get that. In the next week or so he's going to come up with an economic statement, and the trouble is, he's going to say that there's a deficit. Now, that's not the only choice. He has three choices. Premier McGuinty and the finance minister, Dwight Duncan, have three choices. He can run a deficit. That's choice one, just keep on spending; even though the revenue is going south, going down, the expenditures are going up, because it's all payroll. The second one is, he could raise taxes. That's another choice. The third one is, he could cut expenditures. Those are the three choices of any government, of any party, of any stripe. Bob Rae had it. His revenues failed and he introduced the social contract. What was that? The social contract was to eliminate payroll, and a function of the payroll is what is going on in Britain, it's going on in the United States, it's going on around the world.

We'll see shortly what kind of leader Dalton McGuinty is. Leaders are elected to make difficult decisions, not to cut ribbons and smile and fawn and agree with everybody around the table. It's about making difficult but responsible decisions. Where his choices lie—this morning it's true as well. Mr. Caplan, the Minister of Health, said even though the information is available for patients with cancer on where to get the quickest treatment, he's not going to release that information. How cynical to put them, the government, first, and the people last. They've got it all wrong.

In my view, this is a time of great decision for the people of Ontario, not just the decision to elect another Liberal, Stéphane Dion, who doesn't have the foggiest clue about what's going on currently in the economy. To my view, what has to happen—watch for Dalton McGuinty's reaction, what he does of the three choices: raise taxes, run a deficit, or cut spending. I think he'll choose the first two: raise taxes and run a deficit.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I guess I enter this debate in a bit of an odd situation in the sense that, first of all, this is a debate that I think we should have had a long time ago, because we certainly have seen for the last four or five years the train coming down the tracks. I've been raising in this House, along with my leader, Howard Hampton,

and others, what's been happening, first of all, in the forestry sector. That was the first big alarm bell, when you saw the forestry sector not being able to export the amount of wood that we normally do and mills shutting down all across northern Ontario. That was the first bell that was rung that there was a problem in the American housing market, followed shortly by what was going on with the loss of jobs in the manufacturing sector. So I want to say first of all that this is a debate that we should have started some years ago, and the debate should have been about what we can do as a province in order to assist our manufacturing and resource sectors to weather the storm.

I know government members will get up and say, "We did. Look at the great job we did," and the Premier talked about that yesterday, but I say what Ronald Reagan said years ago: Are we any better off four or five years down the road with the McGuinty government than we would have been otherwise? I say no. The government has tinkered at the edges, has had all kinds of great speeches, has made all kinds of commitments to do things, but at the end of the day, the effect that it has had on helping us weather the storm of what's going to happen to our economy, quite frankly, I think is somewhat minimal, and I'll get into that a little bit later.

The Premier calls on us to have this debate, and we're here today and we were here yesterday and we'll be here in future days to have this emergency debate, to talk about what Ontario should be. I sat in this Legislature yesterday, along with my colleagues here in the opposition, both the New Democrats and the Conservatives, and we listened to what the Premier had to say. The speech essentially was, "Look at the great job we've done." There was really no discussion about the vision of what we need to do, and do immediately, in order to deal with this particular situation. I want to say that the opposition was very quiet. We were listening intently to what the Premier was saying, followed by a speech by the leader of the official opposition, Mr. Runciman, and followed by a speech by Mr. Prue, who's our finance critic. Was the government listening? Well, I thought it was very interesting yesterday: The telling sign was that halfway through the speech of Mr. Runciman, the Premier decided to leave. He's the man who said that he wanted to listen to what we had to say, that he wanted to listen to what everybody in this Legislature had to say, no matter what side of the aisle, and as my good colleague Andrea Horwath says—

Ms. Andrea Horwath: So much for that.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —so much for that.

Then, when Mr. Prue took the floor and he started talking about what should be done on the part of interventions in the economy, the finance minister left. So I'm saying, to what degree is the government even taking its own emergency debate seriously if the two key people, who are supposedly calling for this emergency debate to listen to us, are really not paying any attention to what we have to say?

So what's this exercise about? It's about a communications exercise. This is what this is all about. The

government predetermined what the outcome of this debate was by the way that they put forward their motion. They said, "Here's what we want at the end, and we want you, the opposition party, to endorse what the Liberals have done for the last four or five years." I'm sorry, we're not going to play that game.

Now, I'm not going to say here that the government hasn't done anything good in five years. Of course, they've done some good.

Mr. John O'Toole: Name one.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: He says, "Name one."

But the problem is that if you take a look at the initiatives the government talked about in that emergency motion yesterday, it did very little to really help the problems we've been having for the last four or five years.

I'll give you a very quick example. In northern Ontario, when the forestry sector was starting to go through the downturn that we've gone through, and mill after mill after mill was shut down, Howard Hampton was the first to stand and say: "We need to deal with electricity rates. For pulp and paper mills, 25% to 30% of their cost of operation is electricity. Electricity rates have more than doubled, and it's putting those companies at risk." Did the government, over the last four or five years, address that issue?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: No.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No. Here's what they did: They tinkered. They had a really great announcement that they had a type of hydro rate for the pulp and paper industry that might save them some money. What they did was probably save them about 15% to 20% of what the overall increase was, and the increase was more than double.

My leader, Howard Hampton, stood in this House, along with other New Democrats, four or five years ago and said: "We, first of all, have to reverse what the Tories have started with the deregulation and the privatization of hydro. We need to accept that hydro was set up as a basic infrastructure for the economy of Ontario. If we have paper mills in Ontario and we have a strong manufacturing sector, one of the reasons is that we decided many years ago that electricity would be produced and sold at cost to the industry as an economic development tool."

So the government announced a type of program to help, but at the end of the day what did it do? Smooth Rock Falls, Tembec—the mill is shut down. Opasatika, Tembec—the mill is shut down. Cochrane—the mill is indefinitely closed. Timmins—the mill is—I can read this off for the next 20 minutes. My point is that the government, in its motion, said, "Here are the wonderful things that we have done," and what they are, quite frankly, are one-third measures. They have not done what needs to be done. So let's understand what the debate is all about. It's about a government trying to deflect the attention that they're getting and the criticism that they're getting vis-à-vis their inactions and their half-hearted attempts at responding to this issue.

Now let's talk about the economic climate that we're in. We are now in a situation where globally, our economic system is really at risk. We have banks that have overextended themselves by basically taking on some pretty bad credit. We have the stock market, which has basically seen a lot of profit-taking and a lot of speculation that has resulted in stocks increasing in value above the actual company values.

So now what you've got is a correction going on in the marketplace overall. You have people who have defaulted on their loans because of the teaser rates and the sub-prime fiasco of the United States, and it is having a trickling effect, because what happened is that all those mortgages that were held by the banks were basically sold as sort of blocks on Wall Street in order to speculate about how much money they were going to make when the teaser rates ended. People are losing their homes by the millions, because of those teaser rates and the sub-prime rate, in the United States, and it's happening somewhat in other countries as well, because those practices, even though we have a regulated system, are happening in Ontario to a degree—not to the same degree as the United States—and the stock market basically speculated on those. So now, what have we got? People defaulting on their loans, banks saying, "Oh, my God, I can't cover the liability," and the marketplace that bought all of these mortgages saying, "God, we're in trouble."

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Here's the fun part. I'm really quite amused, to a degree, at the reaction that the right wing has had on this issue. We've got Mr. Sarkozy—do you remember him? He's the President of France; he's the beacon of the right wing of France. Mr. Sarkozy stood in his house, he stood in front of his residence, and said, "By God, we've got a problem, and we on the right have a solution. We are going to regulate capitalism." My God, the right-wingers all of a sudden are talking about regulating capitalism. If I stood and said that, as a social democrat, they'd say, "He's nuts. He doesn't know what he's talking about." We've been saying this for years, that capitalism is good, capitalism is absolutely wonderful and the marketplace is great, but you've got to have rules about how the market operates.

It's a little bit like having a freeway. Do you allow people on freeways and roads across this province to drive at any speed they want and not have any laws about how they navigate their way down these highways? No. We understand as a province that you have to have laws that set out speed limits, how you can pass cars and what you're allowed to do as a driver to be responsible, hence a safer highway system. It's the same thing with capitalism. You have to have some rules about what banks can do, to what degree they can basically open themselves up to exposure, how you secure pension funds so that workers aren't left in the dry when banks have made really bad decisions and the market's made bad decisions and how we're allowed to trade stock on the stock market—you need to regulate some of that.

So here we've got the beacon of the right wing in France, Mr. Sarkozy, saying that he wants to regulate

capitalism. Well, George Bush can't be outdone by Mr. Sarkozy, because we know he don't like French fries no more, right? So Mr. Bush says, "I've got an answer. I'm the beacon of the right wing of the free world and I'm going to do—what? I'm going to nationalize my financial institutions." My God, the right wing has gone nuts. They now want to regulate the banks. They've been the ones who have been saying for years, "Let 'er rip. Open it up." Mr. Mulroney, Mr. Harris, Mr. Reagan and Madam Thatcher were the vanguards of the right wing, and they said, "The answer to our economic woes and the answer to building a great economy is deregulate her and let 'er rip." Here they are now, the beacons of the right wing, saying, "Whoops, we kind of messed up. We opened 'er up, we let 'er rip, and look what's going on. She's falling apart." So all of a sudden, George Bush has accepted the NDP manifesto and he has now moved over to the left. Mr. Bush is saying, "We need to have rules about how our banks operate, we need to regulate the banking sector and we need to nationalize the banking sector." My God, there's hope for us on the left. We New Democrats are surging in the polls. Finally, they're beginning to understand, on the right wing, that you can't let capitalism rip. You have to have capitalism, but it's got to have rules, as we have rules on the road.

Then you've got Mr. McCain. He's trying to make it to the White House—and he's quite a nice man. Actually, I was at Hanoi and sat on the bed where he was in prison. So I can say I have a special connection to Mr. McCain.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I can't believe it—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I went to the prison. I was in Hanoi, I saw the prison, I sat on the bed, I looked at his cell—and I can understand that the man has had a very tough life, and I honour him for the service he gave to his country. But you've got to remember he's been a Senator in the United States, and I want Democrats and I want undecided voters in the United States who I know are tuned in to our Legislature—because what we're saying here is so serious that everybody in the United States and Canada is tuned in—you've got Mr. McCain. For years he's been out there, he's been fighting and saying, "I'm the deregulator. You've got to get out of the way of business. You've got to let the corporate sector just do what it's got to do, because when government's on your back, you're just held down and you just can't move." Mr. McCain, the beacon of the right wing, has seen the light. He talked to George Bush and he said, "Let me see that manifesto they wrote in Regina some years ago for the CCF." So Mr. McCain opened up the manifesto and he said, "By George, there are answers here. I know what I'm going to do. I'm the beacon of the right wing. I think you've got to regulate Wall Street." My God, there's hope for us on the left. The social democrats are surging, I must say. Even Mr. McCain understands that unregulated capitalism, an unregulated Wall Street, can lead to great difficulty.

So I just want to say I am very warmed—what's the word?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Heartened.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Heartened. I'm very heartened by the move of the right wing to finally open their eyes and to all of a sudden recognize that social democrats have had it right from the beginning. It was people like Coldwell, people like the Lewises and others, who sat down back then during the time of the Regina Manifesto, along with social democrats around the world, who have said that we need to have a free market system where entrepreneurs can make money and they can prosper and they can dream of the dream that can happen should they make it rich—but you need to have some rules about how workers are treated, about how their pensions are secured, so they're not put out on the street. As my good friend Madame Horwath saw, we talked to a worker in Pembroke last week: 32 years working in a mining company in southern Ontario; his pension is basically defunct. So we need to have rules so that capitalism and entrepreneurship are regulated so that we protect those people who are affected when bad decisions happen, we make sure that there are rules in the stock market so that there isn't the kind of profit-taking that we see, that there are rules within our banking sector—and thank God, in Canada we've got some rules that have protected us, to a degree, from what's going on.

So the right wing has finally seen the light, and I have to say I'm very heart-warmed—what's the word again?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Heartened.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Heartened. Certain words just don't come naturally sometimes. I'm really heartened that the right wing has moved over to the social democratic view. I'm selling party memberships. I'm running for leader. Go to my website and sign up: gillesbisson-forleader.com. I'll take you all in. I really appreciate the support. I know that Mr. George Bush can't vote for me. I'll just be talking about my own leadership at this point. I'm just saying that I want to warn Mr. George Bush that he won't be able to vote for me because he's not a citizen of Ontario.

Let me say this to where we're at when it comes to the response of the right wing—and this is really, I find, quite interesting: They are basically now saying that we're going to lend \$800 billion—the American treasury—to the banks in order to secure their debt. The theory is, if you secure that debt and you take over all of the bad debt in the United States, the banks will then have the liquidity necessary to go out and lend more money to people so that they can go out and make purchases and businesses can do whatever. Isn't part of the problem that we've overextended ourselves? Isn't that the base problem? The base problem is that there's been high speculation on the market because of deregulation. People have been profit-taking. We've seen the stories of what's been happening on the part of the corporate elite across North America, who have been basically milking those investors by all kinds of great big salaries and bonuses.

The point is that the governments of the United States and other countries are now saying—and I heard Mr. Flaherty this morning basically say the same thing:

"We're going to lend money to our banks and that's going to fix the problem, because once we lend money to the banks, they will then be able to lend money to others." Well, I guess to a degree that's true. But isn't the base problem that people overextended themselves, number one? It's a very consumer-driven economy that we have, which is quite good, but people are over-extended. Number two, people have had to default on loans because of interest rates. When the teaser rates came off, they lost their houses. So shouldn't the approach be to do something a little bit different and say, "What we need to do is change the rules around how much interest people have to pay on those loans in order to assist people to make those payments so that monies, yes, can go back to the banks so they can become more liquid to lend money to people where they can afford it"?

I'm a social democrat saying that. I know that you right wingers have finally seen the light. I'm just saying that the base problem that we have is not being dealt with. I fear the response of what the United States has done, and the response of what other countries have done, are not going to have the effect that they think it will. If you look at the market, they made the announcement last week and the market still went crashing down over 1,000 points. What is it going to do for the future? Is it going to fix the problem? I don't think so. I think all it does is put a band-aid on the problem so that at the end, you end up basically not fixing what is the core of the problem. And there is the problem.

So what can we do in Ontario? There are a number of things that we can do in order to be able to assist. The first thing is, we need to take a look at our regulatory authority when it comes to those things that we're able to control. For example, in the stock market, we really need to take a look at what rules we can enact that are not completely out of step with the world and are basically able to protect people's investments. I did it this morning. Every morning now I get up and go on to my Standard Life—I think we're with—and look at my RRSP investments. Then I turn that off; I don't want to look anymore.

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People are really worried. Their life savings, when it comes to what's invested in the market, are taking a real kicking these days. We, as a Legislature, need to say, "What can we do to try to fix that so that people feel more secure?" We should move in the direction of reforming our pension system in Ontario, so that pensions, first of all, are secured, those that are there, and make it easier for workers and employers to go into defined benefit programs when it comes to their pensions and not be locked into the market. That would do a great bit, I think, to give people some security.

What can we do to assist our manufacturing sector? Let me tell you a little secret that the government hasn't figured out. All those corporations out there that are now paying corporate income tax are paying it on what the profits were last year. So when they are paying their quarterly instalments this year, they're paying based on

what their profits were last year. How much profit are they going to have this year? Not a heck of a lot. So once they start to pay their corporate income tax next year based on this year, they're going to be getting credits. They're going to be getting rebates from the federal and provincial governments, which means our revenue projections are completely off the map.

If you're going to do something, you've got to deal with the way that we collect corporate income tax in this country, so that businesses pay their fair share of corporate income tax. But we've got to change the way that we collect it so that it's based on what's actually going on at the moment within their industry. What you do by having them pay, at this downturn, heavy taxes based on last year's income—they don't have the cash flow to help make their payroll and to make the investments they need to make in order to go forward.

I say to the government, you want to have this debate? It's not a bad thing to have a debate. But is this government listening? I don't think so. I started out this morning by talking about how the Premier and the finance minister haven't been here to hear what we have to say. So I'm somewhat fearful; I'm pretty darn convinced that at the end of the day, the government is not going to accept the amendments from either the opposition or the New Democratic Party that talk about concrete proposals about what we can do as we move forward.

I say to members on the government side, you should heed what we're trying to tell you. Don't be so smug—that may be a bit of a strong word—to think that you have all the answers. This is about a collectivity. We, in society, have to work together to face the challenges that we have every day. But in these tough economic times, we really need to roll up our sleeves and understand that if you're a New Democrat, or you're a Conservative, or you're a Liberal, or whoever you might be—because we do have an independent now by the name of Mr. Murdoch—we need to be listening to each other in order to make sure that we do what's right by way of Ontarians.

I really fear that where we're going with this debate is a communication exercise on the part of this government that, at the end of the day, is not going to fix the problem and certainly will not assure the stability of the markets.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. We'll now just take a pause for a couple of minutes while we gather for question period.

Debate deemed adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We'll have introduction of guests at this time.

Guests of Sophia Aggelonitis, Hamilton Mountain: They are the grade 10 students from St. Jean de Brebeuf school. Where are you?

Tim Holman, father of Sarah Holman, the page from Eglinton–Lawrence, and grandparents Bill and Myrna

Holman are with us. They're guests of Mike Colle, member for Eglinton–Lawrence.

Guests of Laura Albanese, York South–Weston: George Harvey Collegiate. Welcome.

The guest of MPP Peter Tabuns, Toronto–Danforth, is Manjit Kundal. Welcome.

Guests also of MPP Laura Albanese from York South–Weston, in the east public gallery, are from the Somali Immigrant Aid Organization. Welcome.

Guests of MPP Paul Miller, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek: Erlene Weaver, co-founder of ROCK, Raising Our Children's Kids, and with her are Diane Chiarelli and Beverley McIntosh. They are located in the members' west gallery.

Also today, guests of page Paige Weller are grandmother Vivien Clarke and sister Hailey Weller, and they are in the west public gallery.

The guest of page Lauren Chan is John Chan, and he will be in the public gallery this afternoon.

Guests of Sarah Holman are grandparents Myrna and Bill Holman, whom I've already introduced.

Those are our guests for today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: We were advised the Minister of Finance would be here, and he is entering the building as we speak.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Could we reset the clock, please.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the minister. Minister, as you know—we saw it in the media this morning and last night—there's a great deal of skepticism surrounding the real motives for your so-called emergency debate motion on the economy. I think most people understand that it is a partisan motion. There's also a suspicion that you're using this to set the table for some bitter pills and more broken Liberal promises. Minister, will you stand in your place today and assure Ontarians that there will be no tax, user fee or levy increases in your upcoming economic statement?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: On October 22, I will be introducing the fall statement, bringing it forward, and there will be no tax increases, fees or levy increases in that document.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Well, I guess that means a deficit—that's the bottom line—and probably a significant one.

Members are being asked to participate in a debate for the next four days without information. We've asked the minister, and the Premier as well, and I'm going to go back to him again: To help members on all sides of the House to participate in a meaningful way in this debate,

will you, at the very least, give us your latest update on the status of the \$800-million reserve fund and the \$1-billion commitment you made to find efficiencies and savings in order to balance the budget this year? We're seven months into the fiscal year. Surely you know what's happening with those files.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: On October 22, we will release the fall statement. I remind the member that last week we published the economic data for the second quarter, the most up-to-date numbers. We have published the first-quarter data, as per FTAA. We have taken a number of steps, sir, to encourage a public discussion about the important issues of the day here in the Legislature and across the province.

I would submit to the member and the Leader of the Opposition that we are still gathering information that's pertinent to the fall statement. We will have it on the 22nd. I'll look forward to his response and the response of the opposition parties in general as we move forward through very, very challenging times in the world economy.

1050

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Of course, the reality is we're in a vulnerable situation in this province because this government has been on an unprecedented spending spree, beyond what David Peterson put this province through. They've had phenomenal revenue increases; they've spent every plug nickel and more, running up the debt in the process. They've left no cushion for tough times and, believe it or not, they even reduced their rainy day fund this year.

Minister, we have four days left in the debate on this motion, and if this so-called emergency debate isn't the sham that most people think it is, you have to be much more forthcoming to make this debate and discussion meaningful. How can we know where we're going if we don't know where we're starting?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: You know, on June 4, John Tory said, "I think we need to have an emergency debate on the economy so we can hear from all the MPPs everywhere," and we heard it from the New Democrats, so that's what we're doing. But let me tell you what we won't do. We won't sacrifice public education on the altar of tax cuts for large corporations. That's not something this government will do.

Yesterday in your speech you endorsed Mr. Drummond's recommendations, which I presume means you want to harmonize PST and GST. That means, in fact, he wants to tax home heating oil. We need you to be clear, and that's why we're having the debate.

We have laid out a five-point plan. This government has delivered three successive balanced budgets. We eliminated the \$5.6-billion budget of that member's government and we will continue to manage the affairs of the province prudently and in a balanced and responsible—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): New question.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Yesterday the Minister of Finance and the Premier said that the Premier's resolution in this debate that is ongoing in the Legislature is for the purpose of hearing from the opposition, from all members of the House, their recommendations and input into the current crisis Ontario faces. The minister will know that yesterday the Leader of the Opposition tabled a specific amendment that incorporates positive recommendations that we believe should be incorporated into an economic action plan.

Will the minister now confirm for us that those proposals will in fact be given serious consideration by the government? What is the process that he has in place to ensure that ideas such as that are in fact incorporated and dealt with in a proactive way, to ensure that they are included in an economic—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Response?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: That's why we're having the debate. We're going to have to vote on it. The Leader of the Opposition did present an amendment; we are looking at it carefully to see what he's recommending. I can tell the members opposite that the five-point plan we've laid out is a better plan than they've laid out, because they really haven't laid out a plan per se.

I would invite the member opposite: Instead of spending all this time on the process around what we're doing, let's start talking about the economy and what real people are feeling. Let's show some empathy to the people of Ontario. Let's not, like the federal finance minister did, trash the Ontario economy at precisely the time we should be discussing it and moving forward.

So, yes, we do have a process. We will respond through the course of the debate to your proposals and then we're going to have a vote. If you choose to vote against keeping funding for education and health care, if you choose to vote against assisting business, that is your position. We may differ.

What's important is that we have a plan moving forward and all members of this Legislature have the opportunity to participate in that discussion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: We want to believe the Premier and the Minister of Finance when they tell us that this is not just about political rhetoric. What we want to do is ensure that in the course of the debate, as we and members from the third party and other members of this Legislature bring forward ideas, there is a process in place by which those ideas are being properly recorded, that those ideas will then be dealt with in an orderly way so that, in fact, beyond what the minister is saying—a vote at the end of this debate—those ideas will live on, that those ideas can be dealt with in an orderly way by this Legislature so that they can, in fact, be incorporated into an economic action plan that will address the very things

that the minister is saying. Will the minister confirm for us that there is in fact a process that he has implemented where people are recording specific recommendations that we can then deal with?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Hansard still operates in the House, and we're going to look at every recommendation.

Let me just go through the Conservative six-point plan, which is the third version of it since June, by the way. You suggest we provide an economic update. We are—October 22. We also provided you, last week, with the most recent economic data. Provide a financial update: We did, in June, with all the up-to-date information; it said exactly where the province's books were relative to the budget. Tax cuts and more spending on training: We have \$3 billion in targeted tax cuts for businesses that you, sir, by the way, voted against.

You want an additional \$5 billion in tax cuts. We don't support that. Let me be clear about that, because we think it's important to have a balanced plan. You may want to follow the lead of Mr. Tory, who said on CBC Radio on June 4, "I'd say well fine then, let the MPPs, there's 106 others besides him, you know, put their ideas on the record. I think at least a debate would allow other people to put some ideas on the record." That was good advice—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Final supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: Here is what we would recommend to the Minister of Finance: We would recommend, in the same way that we do in standing committees, that specific recommendations be recorded and tabled with the Legislature following the debate. We also would recommend to the government that they form a select committee on the economy, that that select committee be struck following his economic statement, that that select committee then take into consideration the results of his statement and the results of the recommendations that come forward, and that then that economic select committee be charged with the responsibility to put together an economic action plan, an all-party consensus that we can then move forward with in this province.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This government put together an economic action plan: It was called our budget. That budget has the five-point plan, which we have been doing for three years now. We are investing in infrastructure to create jobs and improve our productivity. That member and his party voted against it. We are providing select targeted tax cuts to businesses to get cash into their hands in a challenging economic time. That member and his party voted against it. Before the Legislature this week is a bill dealing with the elimination of tax, to stimulate research and investment in commercialization of new Canadian technologies. That member and his party, I think, are voting against it.

This government has laid out a five-point plan and provided specifics. We will update where we are relative to the global economic situation on October 22. Our response has been the right response. We'll adjust it as

need be, because we need to respond to the fears and concerns of the people of Ontario in a prudent—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): New question.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, the Premier said he called yesterday's debate on the economic resolution to engage us in a healthy collision of ideas. We sat here yesterday, the members of the official opposition and we New Democrats, and listened intently to what the Premier had to say. It was then the turn of the opposition: first the Leader of the Opposition and then our Mr. Prue, the critic for finance. He didn't stay to listen to what they had to say. If you're not present to hear what we have to say, does that not speak—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I remind the member there is not to be any reference made to absence.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If you're not present to hear what we have to say, doesn't that speak volumes about how you are not taking your own debate seriously?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I would remind the member of what Mr. Hampton said on August 8. He said, "The Legislature needs to get back to work to approve a plan to protect jobs." That's what this debate is about, and we are listening.

I would remind the member opposite that just yesterday his colleague from Beaches—East York raised a very important issue, and upon reflection, we're changing the law because of his good work. So we are listening.

I'll tell the member opposite we're listening to labour leaders. I met with the building tradespeople yesterday on the phone. We had a good conversation about where the economy is going. We have had meetings with bank economists, businesses, labour leaders. We're going to continue to do that. We take very seriously what the member and his party opposite have to say about the issues of the day and we will respond accordingly.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You've already responded accordingly because the motion you put forward basically says we have to stand in opposition and say Kumbaya to what you've done for the last four years, and it's not working.

Let me ask you this question. We New Democrats, through our critic, Mr. Prue, put forward a number of ideas and an amendment to the amendment to the motion. Are you prepared to accept those amendments?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It's only the beginning of the debate, and we'll analyze them. I can tell the member opposite we're not going to increase taxes on the lowest-paid Ontarians, if that's what he means. If the member suggests that we should run up a deficit in the billions of dollars—that is, to try to spend our way out of it the way

he and his colleagues did at one time in the past—what I'm going to say to him is no, we won't do that.

What I can say is that our five-point plan to invest in infrastructure, technology and targeted tax cuts and, by the way, coupled with the poverty strategy my colleague opposite is going to bring forward, is the right, balanced responsible approach in difficult and challenging times that understands the problems and predicaments that Ontario families are feeling right across the province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Final supplementary.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, I asked you a specific question and that question was, are you prepared to support the amendments put forward by the New Democratic caucus through our critic, Mr. Prue? What do you do? You basically engage in what John McCain does in the United States, which is to try to deflect all the attention away from you so that they're not looking at you being the cause of the problem.

Let me ask you this specifically. One of the things that we're calling for is an industrial hydro rate. Are you prepared to say today that yes, you admit hydro rates are a problem for the manufacturing sector and that you're prepared to accept at least that part of the amendment that would see an industrial hydro rate for the manufacturers of Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This government is taking a balanced and complete approach to the challenges of the manufacturing and forestry sectors.

I'll remind the member opposite, when we provided assistance to get the next generation of jobs into this province, that member voted against it. When we eliminated capital taxes for manufacturers, the forestry sector and the agri-food sector and put cash in their pockets right at the time—and that money is flowing last month and this month—that member voted against it. That member voted against the advice of the CAW. He voted against the advice of the manufacturers' association.

This government has constructed a five-point plan that is the right approach to the economy. I would invite the member to look carefully at what we're doing.

Instead of just voting against everything we do, start to support the initiatives that are supported by the CAW, that are supported by many of our largest manufacturers. That's what we're—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): New question?

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, workers across this province wish that you were listening to what they and we have been saying for a long time. You didn't answer my question, and the question is, are you prepared to put in place the recommendation put forward by us on industrial hydro rates? Instead, you try to deflect and say that we don't support your initiatives. We didn't support them because they're not working. We've had over

200,000 workers put out of work in this province over the last four years, so your record is not stellar.

Let me ask you another one. Workers' pensions are at risk. We see all kinds of workers having their investments by way of the market at risk and people who have defined pension plans losing their hard-earned dollars as they approach retirement. Are you prepared to accept our recommendation to have pension reform in order to secure people's investments for retirement?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I assume that was to the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The NDP are catching up. Last year we appointed Mr. Harry Arthurs to review pension laws, a dialogue that has involved all working men and women. Mr. Arthurs will be reporting back next month, and I'll look forward to the member's response and the NDP's response.

What I can tell him is this: We will support good ideas that are prudent and balanced and protect workers like this government has done. I ask the member opposite, why did you vote against our training initiatives, all of them, over \$1 billion? You, sir, voted against them. Why did you vote against money for the forestry sector that helps your riding and your constituents? Why did you vote against that? And most importantly, why did you vote against an increase in welfare rates this year? That's a shameful record.

This government has a balanced, full plan that is costed and responsible—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: So far, the cat's out of the bag. The government is saying they're not going to move on industrial hydro rates, and they're trying to deflect the attention from what's happening to pensions by saying, "Stay tuned. A report will be coming real soon to a channel near you." People's pensions have been lost, and this government is sitting idly by, hardly doing anything.

Let me ask you this. The workers in Welland at John Deere, the workers at Abitibi, and others in the Welland area have lost their jobs. We proposed a jobs commissioner to sit down with labour, to sit down with municipalities and employers, to look at what can be done to secure those jobs that are currently here that we're losing. Will you accept our proposal to put in place a jobs commissioner in this province?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The people of Ontario rejected that proposal last year in a general election. And if you think that's going to secure one job, you really don't get what's going on in the world economy, do you? We are in the midst of a financial crisis in the world today, and these guys throw out ideas that aren't based on fact, simply saying, "Do this, do this, do this," without thinking of the consequences or the outcomes.

We have laid out a prudent, responsible plan—investing in education, investing in infrastructure, targeted tax cuts, and building partnerships with local municipalities as well as with the federal government—that Ontarians respect and know is the right plan to get through the most

challenging circumstances this province, this country, indeed the world, has seen in many, many, many years.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Final supplementary.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: This is true Liberalism, I must say. The finance minister stands up and basically says that they don't have to listen to what the opposition has to say. They're falling into the same trap that David Peterson did some years ago, which stamps you as a fairly arrogant government, quite frankly.

I say to you, we have made some real proposals that would help to safeguard the jobs that we have and help build our economy.

I'm asking you again. We have put forward a series of amendments and proposals in order to deal with this crisis. If you're not prepared to accept our amendments or the Conservative amendments, doesn't that mean you've already decided you're going to do nothing?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I can tell the member, he proposes, with an industrial hydro rate, to shift the cost of electricity to small individuals as opposed to workers. I can tell the member opposite that his jobs commissioner was rejected by the people of Ontario last year.

The people of Ontario are very wise. They understand the challenges before us today, they understand the situation in world financial markets, and they understand the need for a balanced, prudent approach, moving forward.

We will continue to focus investments on infrastructure. In two weeks, municipalities across Ontario will see \$1.1 billion that will immediately create jobs and investment and get cash into communities' hands to help get us through this circumstance.

Today is the time for serious response to world-challenging issues. We are listening carefully to many, many people, and we look forward to this ongoing debate—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): New question. The member for—

Mr. Frank Klees: Newmarket–Aurora.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: That should be worth a few extra minutes in the question, Speaker.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Finance: His performance today and performances like that, I believe, are largely responsible for the cynicism on the part of the public about politicians and the political process. On the one hand, the minister and the Premier have invited input from the opposition on a very serious public policy issue, and when asked, on the other hand, if he would commit to an orderly process and strike a select committee to deal with that important information that's being brought forward by members of this Legislature, he declines and boasts that they have all the answers.

I want to ask him one more time: Why will the minister and his government not agree to strike a select committee to deal with the information that's being brought

forward here, so that together we could form an economic—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Response? Minister of Finance.

1110

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have a Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. Every budget bill goes there; every decision of this Legislature goes there. In fact, unlike your government, when we send legislation there, we actually have a chance to debate it in committee.

That committee has been ongoing, doing good work. They report to me on a regular basis. We had them meeting throughout the spring on various items. We look forward to moving forward with legislation coming out of this House. Likely, there will be a fall budget bill, as there always is. That will go to committee for full debate.

What creates cynicism is when Mr. Tory calls for an emergency debate in June, the Premier gives him one, and then you say, "You shouldn't have done it." That's what creates cynicism.

We look forward to all of the advice you have to offer, and we look forward to it making its way to the standing committee. That committee, we believe, does good work.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: The cynicism mounts. The minister is fully aware of what happens in our standing committees in this place. There isn't an idea or an amendment that is brought forward by the opposition that is ever accepted.

I'm asking, in the spirit in which the Premier brought this proposal forward, that this government strike a select committee that can take seriously the recommendations brought forward here and that can work together on a non-partisan basis to develop an economic plan for this province that can be incorporated into the upcoming budget.

I ask the Minister of Finance one more time, for the benefit of the members of the public watching this debate, why will you not do that on behalf of the people of Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again, we believe that the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs is the proper forum. It's been working for years. There are members from all parties on it. It affords us the opportunity to debate all government initiatives in that committee. We will continue to seek advice through that committee on an ongoing basis.

The challenges in the world economy today demand an emergency debate in the Legislature. It allows us to give expression to the fears and concerns of the people of our province and to tell them what we are doing. They are listening carefully to what the opposition is saying in terms of what they should do.

I have great confidence in the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. The government will continue to refer its initiatives to that committee. I'm glad we are taking four days of our time here to debate

the challenges in the economy. It makes good sense, it's the right thing to do, and it is the right forum in which to do that.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, grandparents raising their children's kids are often living on a fixed retirement income. They are trying to help their children through difficult times and raise their grandchildren: a difficult job. They want to keep their families together, Minister.

Will this minister explain why she has failed these grandparents by issuing a new directive which ensures that temporary care assistance to raise their grandkids is cut off?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I know that this member always comes back with the same question. Let me explain why there is this benefit that is offered to grandparents, this temporary care assistance.

First of all, I want to thank the grandparents who believe that they have a responsibility towards their grandchildren. I applaud them.

These benefits are to provide assistance for children in financial need while in the temporary care of an adult who does not have a legal obligation to support the child. This benefit is not income-tested. I will say to the member opposite, yes, he brought a good point to me the last time, because there was inequity in the way grandparents were treated across the province, and we have corrected that. We've sent a notice all across—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Supplementary.

Mr. Paul Miller: Minister, take a look in the west gallery. There are three grandparents from Hamilton that you've cut off: Diane Chiarelli, Beverley McIntosh, and Erlene Weaver—75 years old, on a fixed income. Well done. These three grandparents are here today to implore the minister to reconsider her decision about temporary care assistance for grandparents.

Will this minister do the right thing? The Minister of Finance talked about empathy for the people of Ontario. Show some empathy. Will you guarantee that all grandparents across this province will be eligible for temporary care assistance, effective immediately?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I will guarantee that all grandparents who are entitled under temporary care assistance to receive this benefit will receive it; I guarantee that. But then I will also ask the member on the other side to stand up and say to the grandparents who are in receipt of—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, come to order. Minister?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I will ask the member from Hamilton to answer this question: Why, when we proposed an increase to the grandparents, did this mem-

ber vote against it? It's all very nice to stand up today and say that you're in support of grandparents. Every time we moved forward with an increase, you voted against it. Shame on you.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a question for the Minister of Labour in regard to the gouging of Ontario workers by the federal government when it comes to unemployment insurance. Many of my constituents have repeatedly brought this to my attention. They are just hard-working Ontarians who sometimes fall on hard times and need some help when they lose their jobs. Some of my constituents have expressed thanks to the Premier for making such a great effort on their behalf to making sure that the Stephen Harper government recognizes the inequity when it comes to unemployment insurance.

I would like to ask why workers in Ontario receive \$4,600 less when they lose their jobs than other workers in the rest of the country. Why is it that Ontario workers pay into unemployment insurance, yet it's almost impossible for an unemployed worker in my riding to get unemployment insurance in Ontario? How come this gouging of workers takes place in Canada today?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I'd like to thank the member for bringing forward this very important concern that's affecting all of our constituencies. It's very disheartening when anybody we know or someone from our community loses their job. There's quite an impact on the individual, on the individual's family and on that community.

One thing that we have always upheld here in the province of Ontario is fairness. It's a value that we cherish, it's something that we live by, and we've given fairness to this magnificent country: fairness to Atlantic Canada, to Quebec, to the west, to the north. Well, here in Ontario, some of our best-trained and hard-working Ontarians, through no fault of their own, have lost their jobs. They deserve fairness. They deserve that \$4,600 that they are being shortchanged by the federal government—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Supplementary.

Mr. Mike Colle: What the unemployed workers are asking in my constituency office is, why do they have to work more weeks to be eligible for unemployment insurance in Ontario? Why are they getting off unemployment insurance faster than people in other parts of the country? Why is it that they can't even get the training programs in Ontario because they're not EI-eligible?

So the question again is, why should the workers of Ontario listen to the Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen Harper, saying that this issue is none of his concern? How can we stand by and let Stephen Harper ignore the workers of Ontario when it comes to this gouging of Ontario workers who pay unemployment insurance like everybody else does in Canada? Why should this gouging be allowed to continue?

1120

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I concur with the member for Eglinton—Lawrence. He's quite right: The federal government has not stood up to the plate. They have not come forward with fairness. I know that my predecessor, Brad Duguid, wrote to the Minister of Labour federally and put forward our concerns, our case for fairness for the \$4,600 that our workers are being short changed. This is blatantly unfair. Everybody in this House should write to their federal member, write to the Prime Minister, and make sure that he understands that Ontarians deserve their fair share. Every year we send \$20 billion to Ottawa. The TD report has said that we are being discriminated against by \$11.8 billion here in this province. It would mean a difference to those workers, to their families, to our communities. Stand up for Ontario—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): New question.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Finance: The minister, in his response to me, reconfirmed that Ontario's economic situation merits a special and emergency debate of the Legislature, but he disagrees that there should be a special select committee struck to deal with the issue. What he did say is that he expressed confidence in the finance committee. I would ask the minister now: Given his confidence in the finance committee of this place, will he today agree to refer the results of this debate and the amendments made by the opposition parties to the finance committee for full deliberation in the context of the finance committee so that we can in fact ensure a proper economic plan for this province?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I just got the terms of reference for the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. They're very instructive, I think, to the House. This is as per standing order 107(e), and I refer the member to that: "The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs ... is empowered to consider and report to the House its observations, opinions and recommendations on the fiscal and economic policies of the province and to which all related documents shall be deemed to have been referred immediately when the said documents are tabled."

The process is in place. Over the years I've had a number of outstanding reports—and, I may add, with dissenting opinions in those reports—that have helped inform public opinion. I'm glad we have that process. We will continue in this House to have this debate on the economy. We think it's important for all members to debate the economy. We welcome the initiative that Mr. Tory suggested, and we're glad we're able to accommodate what he asked for.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: Quite bizarre, coming from the Minister of Finance. We're fully aware of what the

mandate of the finance committee is. One of those is to conduct public hearings. I'm simply asking him now, on behalf of every member of the Legislature: Will he agree to refer this important business to that finance committee with the request for public hearings so that we can have a fulsome discussion of this important issue? If he won't do that, will he explain to this House and to the public why not?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Every piece of government legislation that I have done, including budget bills, will go to committee. I would say to the member opposite, though, Ontarians want to know what their leaders are doing right now. Ontarians want to hear from us as well, and they're not hearing from you today. They are hearing about process. They are hearing about calling witnesses. They're hearing this, that and the other thing. What they've heard from this government is that we need a balanced approach to the challenging world economic circumstances. We need to invest in infrastructure—something you voted against. We need to invest in skills training to help the unemployed get through these challenging times and find new careers. You, sir, voted against that. They need a federal government that at least shows some empathy to what is going on in Ontario instead of trashing the people of Ontario by saying that it's the last place to invest.

We will continue to implement our balanced five-point plan—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): New question.

COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Labour. I'm sure the minister agrees that it's precisely in times of economic crisis that respect for our province's labour laws and collective agreements must be maintained. That is why it was disturbing for me to read quotes in the Sault Star, attributed to the member from Sault Ste. Marie, that seemed to suggest that the province's financial support for a proposed pipe mill in his riding may be tied to concessions related to already negotiated successor rights. Will this minister pledge to this House that the province will not use the hammer of provincial financial assistance to undermine the collective agreements in Sault Ste. Marie or anywhere else in this province?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: What I say to the member is thank you very much for the question. It gives me the opportunity to speak to the labour relations that we have brought to the province of Ontario, the best labour relations in the last 30 years, with labour, employees and employers working together and understanding that the collective agreement is the best way to move forward. It's not a social contract that that party brought forward when they were in government.

What I can say is that we have been able to bring fairness and balance and stability to the workplace. We have done this by working together with all our partners.

The Ministry of Labour has wonderful individuals who work towards collective agreements. We have terrific mediators who are out there in the field working with our businesses and working with employees. We've got a record that is stellar, and I continue to build on that.

Mr. Paul Miller: With 230,000 manufacturing jobs lost in this province, Ontario's manufacturing communities are desperate for any kind of investment in new jobs. But I repeat: It is precisely during this time of extreme economic uncertainty that the collective agreements that provide job security for millions of Ontarians must be respected. Will the minister commit to this House that the provincial financial assistance for new investments will never, ever be tied to weakening job security in collective agreements?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: What I can agree with the member on is that we are all saddened and empathetic when anybody loses their job. Yes, some individuals have lost their jobs. That's why we work so hard on our five-point plan to be able to have skills-to-jobs training, so that we can get those unemployed workers re-employed.

I just received a question from the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, and it talked of fairness for our unemployed workers. It talked to employment insurance. It talked to a blatant wrong that is happening from the federal government. I would hope that that member over there would stand up for our unemployed workers who are being shortchanged, ripped off \$4,600. I don't see that member lending a voice to our fairness campaign. I would hope that he would do so for—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): New question.

SKILLS TRAINING

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. We know that our province is facing some tough economic times. We are seeing some sectors struggle in the face of the high price of oil, the slowing US economy and the other challenges that economies around the world are trying to grapple with.

We also know that some sectors are seeing real growth and are demanding more skilled workers to fill high-value positions. Mining, information technology, energy and construction are a few examples of high-demand industries that will require skilled workers to move them forward. An aging workforce, coupled with low birth rates, is only exacerbating a potential skills shortage. I know that in Guelph, employers tell me that one of their key concerns is finding enough skilled workers. Minister, can you tell this House and my constituents what specific steps you and your ministry are taking to address a possible skills shortage here in Ontario?

Hon. John Milloy: I want to thank the honourable member for her question and for her advocacy on behalf of her community in terms of post-secondary education.

In the context of her question on training, I think all members are aware that, under the leadership of the

Premier, we announced a \$1.5-billion skills-to-jobs action plan in the recent budget, which is being implemented right now. Part of that is aimed specifically at skilled trades on the infrastructure front, in terms of providing the type of equipment that is needed and the type of facilities to make sure that we have an adequate supply of skilled workers for the future. Over the summer, the Premier and I were in a number of communities and announced \$190 million for our province's community colleges to build and expand their capacity to train more skilled workers.

1130

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Answer.

Hon. John Milloy: We also invested in union, union-employer and employer training centres as they play a pivotal role in skills training. This funding, as I mentioned, will allow training centres to purchase new equipment so—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Supplementary?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Minister, in your answer, you mentioned apprenticeships. When I speak to young people who are contemplating their future education plans, many students and their parents are still reluctant to choose a career in the skilled trades. We know that the future of our economy depends on a steady supply of skilled labour, but we hear accusations from members on the other side of the House that we're somehow restricting or preventing our apprentices from learning a trade. I know that we are working hard to ensure that students receive adequate and relevant training and that they complete that training. But I still get mixed messages from my constituents about the effectiveness of some apprenticeship training. Could you please clarify for us what you are doing to encourage more people to learn a trade and how you plan to improve the system to ensure that Ontario continues to move forward?

Hon. John Milloy: I'm very proud of our government's record in terms of apprenticeships—we have 50,000 more apprentices in the province of Ontario right now than when we took office—but at the same time I recognize the concerns that are expressed by the member. All of us realize we need to continue to reform and enhance the apprenticeship system to make it more effective, to attract more people to the skilled trades and to make sure they are trained effectively.

Several weeks ago, I had the pleasure of making an announcement in Hamilton, Ontario, that our government would be moving forward with a plan, first suggested to us by Mr. Tim Armstrong, to create a college of trades. This college will help promote the skilled trades as a career and ensure that students are receiving the training they need to succeed and contribute to Ontario's economy. The college will put those in the skilled trades on a similar footing as teachers, nurses and doctors, all of whom have their own governing bodies. I look forward to working with all members on all sides of the House as we put together a proposal for this exciting new college.

SKILLS TRAINING

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Deputy Premier. Deputy Premier, in your government's last budget, you set up the Second Career program to provide financial help to laid-off workers and to help get them into new careers. This program represents a huge and central plank of that budget. In an attempt to discover some details of how this program is working, your training minister's office was contacted to find out how many people have either received or are waiting to receive money from the program, along with the number of people who have applied. The minister's assistant Emily Durst responded that a costly freedom-of-information request would be required to get that information. This is a \$300-million program, the bragging rights of your last budget. Why are you hiding this information?

Hon. George Smitherman: I'd like to refer to the question to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. John Milloy: I think members on all sides of the House are concerned with the layoffs that are happening in this province, and I'm very proud that through Employment Ontario we're able to help 900,000 Ontarians annually. Through the rapid re-employment training service, our action centres that we've set up across the province, we've been able to help 53,000 people in one year alone; these are people who have been specifically laid off.

The honourable member references the Second Career strategy, and I know he would not want to leave the impression that that's the only program we offer. It in fact is a new program which adds on to existing programs. But I'm pleased to report to him, and these numbers are changing, obviously, as more people are attracted to the program, that this summer we've seen an additional 3,000—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Answer.

Hon. John Milloy:—people come forward for training, 1,100 specifically for Second Career. As I say, we continue to work with providers to improve the program, to publicize the program, and those—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: If you're so proud of this program, why wouldn't your assistant simply tell us that information? Eleven hundred people, though, is abysmal when there are 300,000 people who have lost their jobs in this province. You were supposed to, in this year alone, have 20,000 people apply for that program and then spend the \$300 million over the next three years. That's what you said in your budget. That's what the Premier, you and many of your colleagues have been bragging about.

I think the program is a failure. I think you are not helping people, and if you are giving them financial assistance, you're unwilling to tell us how much financial assistance they are getting, who is getting help in what parts of the province, how many people. It's our job to

figure out whether this program is effective, and so far you you're failing that test.

Hon. John Milloy: As I said, I know the member would never want to leave the impression that Second Career is the only program offered. There is a series of programs, as I pointed out. Last year, our action centres helped 53,000 people.

How dare that member stand up and call this program a failure? Does he want to hear about some of the personal stories and tell them they are failures? Does he want to tell Robert, who is 45 years old and was laid off from his job as a general labourer at a small powder painting company in London? Robert has been accepted to complete his training as a certified welder. Robert is not a failure.

John, 46 years old, was laid off from the local paper mill after working there for 13 years. John is enrolled in the power engineering technology program at St. Clair College. John is not a failure.

Bonnie, a 33-year-old mother of two, was laid off from an automotive production line. Through Second Career, Bonnie will receive \$28,000 to take a medical—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. New question.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Deputy Premier: Just this morning, we've learned of a serious outbreak of invasive group A streptococcal disease in the Thunder Bay area. At least 10 people are dead, with at least 75 cases confirmed. The first case occurred in August 2007, yet the public is only now being made aware. Given the C. difficile outbreak, the public's confidence in our public health system is already shaken. When did the government know about this outbreak and what did it do about it?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Deputy Premier.

Hon. George Smitherman: I would like to join the honourable member and all members of the House in expressing our condolences for any circumstance where individuals have been impacted. I think it is well known that in the current environments in which we operate, the risk of spread of infectious disease and the like really does call upon all of us for a heightened level of vigilance.

Here is what I've been informed about the matter that the honourable member raises: I can confirm what he said, that Thunder Bay public health indicates 75 cases. They first made information available in May. At that time, the ministry responded to a request to enhance the epidemiological support that was required. At the very same time, when the minister became aware, they advised the health unit to alert local physicians, which was done, and the health unit sent out an alert to all of those local communities and initiated practices designed to focus on those communities most at risk of contracting this. A substantive—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Minister, you know that many public health units across Ontario don't have a permanent medical officer of health. You know that we have privatization creeping into the system. The public health system is being put at risk, and we need answers from you and a plan from this government to alleviate the public's concern that dangerous outbreaks are being dealt with in a timely manner and that the public is being kept fully informed.

Hon. George Smitherman: It's a little bit unfortunate that the honourable member has been spending so much time out on the campaign trail that he is bringing that language in here. There's no evidence of this privatization with respect to public health. If we look at public health, what we see evidence of is having doubled the funding for public health units in Ontario. Because the province of Ontario is providing 75% of the resources for all public health units, they have had the capacity to respond in a timely and effective way to these sorts of challenges.

I could confirm for the honourable member, as I said earlier, that as notice was made available, a response in the form of additional epidemiological support was initiated; initiation of awareness to physicians in local communities and alerting public health units across the country of what was going on were all part and parcel of the response, and we—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

1140

HEALTHY SCHOOLS

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question is for the Minister of Education, and I'm asking it on behalf of Ron and Cathy Milne and John and Cynthia Crowley, who represent many dairy farmers in the riding of Peterborough.

Minister, on September 24, students in my riding of Peterborough celebrated World School Milk Day. They joined students from some 40 countries who participated in this event. This initiative is sponsored by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and locally by the dairy farmers association of Ontario. They are here today and they will be hosting a reception later this afternoon.

We know the importance this government places on children and healthy schools. Would the minister please outline the steps we're taking to promote healthy schools, not only in the riding of Peterborough, but throughout Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I thank the member for Peterborough for his question. Indeed, the health and well-being of all our students, in Peterborough and across the province, is very important to this government. We know that the well-being of our kids depends on a healthy, active lifestyle, so we've put initiatives in place to increase daily physical activity in our elementary

schools—that DPA that our kids are involved in, 20 minutes of activity a day. We've also introduced legislation to drop unhealthy trans fats from food and beverages sold in schools. I'm happy that the dairy farmers are here today, because they were instrumental in endorsing and working with us on Bill 8. Thank you for being here.

Our Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Answer.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —ensures that there are healthier foods in our cafeterias, and of course milk is one of those healthier foods. Naturally occurring trans fats are not a problem—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Leal: We also have in our legislative gallery today representatives here from the Heart and Stroke Foundation; I know they're also supportive of this government's great leadership in efforts to ensure healthier schools are made available to our students across Ontario. But I also know that the government's commitment to healthy schools goes beyond just healthy food. Would the minister outline some of our other successes and the leadership we're showing on this file?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member from Peterborough is exactly right. The Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act builds on a comprehensive strategy which includes releasing a framework for healthy schools, daily physical activity, as I said, legislation on anaphylaxis and investing in defibrillators. Just last month, I had the pleasure of announcing a \$1.4-million investment from the province that will help the Advanced Coronary Treatment Foundation to train teachers how to use defibrillators and perform CPR. I had the privilege of working with some students who have had this training from their teachers, and they are much more prepared than the previous generation of students was to be able to take action if there is a sudden coronary incident. The teachers will pass this knowledge on to all of those students, and it is a valuable learning activity. Our partnership with ACT—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Answer.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —complements the government's other strategies on creating healthy and safe environments for students.

MUNICIPALITIES

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Deputy Premier, your government promised in 2006, prior to the 2007 election, that you would review the provincial-municipal service review. Again, that review was due some time ago. It was promised earlier in the year; it was promised again in the summer. In fact, many people felt it would be announced this year at the AMO conference, and yet again you failed to deliver.

Given the current economic uncertainty, could you bring this House and the people of Ontario up to speed and up to date on when your government intends to introduce this review?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I've had the privilege of working with my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs, along with our counterparts, both AMO and the city of Toronto, on this very challenging unwinding of the previous government's policies with respect to municipalities. I am pleased with the way discussions have unfolded, and we've worked hard and taken more time than any of us had originally hoped in order to come up with what we hope will be a solution to a number of the challenges faced by our municipal partners. I anticipate that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, along with representatives from AMO and the city of Toronto, will have more to say about this matter very shortly.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Supplementary?

Mr. John O'Toole: Quite honestly, your response shows a lack of credibility. Understanding the issue has been around—there's been three different reviews on this since 1985. Currently, we're hearing from the city of Toronto that they are going to increase taxes; Ottawa and London this morning are talking about it. It really is unnerving that municipalities are now preparing their budgets and you are not prepared to make a disclosure to them and to help them out. In fact, if you would look at the assessment notices that are now arriving at people's houses—people are concerned that you aren't going to give them the information because of this economic uncertainty.

Please be honest with the people of Ontario and tell them when you will review—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Peterborough.

Mr. John O'Toole: —to allow municipalities to balance their budgets with the right information that you have but won't release.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: My colleague from St. Catharines uses the expression, "more nerve than a canal horse." That was the government that downloaded everything from social services to public health care onto municipalities, and he has the nerve to stand up in this House and talk about this. You know what? We are at the table with AMO and Toronto working in a collaborative fashion to build on what this government's done: a new Municipal Act, which you voted against; \$1.1 billion in infrastructure money that will flow to our municipal partners in about two weeks, and you voted against that; \$900 million in our past fall economic statement for municipal infrastructure, and you voted against that. We have uploaded ODSP and the Ontario drug benefit, saving property taxpayers \$900 million; you voted against that. We are implementing a property tax credit for senior citizens that—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): New question.

POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. The Canadian Association of Food Banks released an open letter yesterday calling for action to address rising hunger across the country that is resulting from the economic downturn. More and more people are being forced to go to food banks: in Cornwall, the numbers are up 37%; in Toronto, the supply is hundreds of thousands of pounds short. Particularly vulnerable people are seniors and those part-time employees who are losing their jobs. Yesterday, in debate, the Premier did not mention seniors, contingent workers or that forbidden P word, "poverty."

My question is, what is this government going to do now and on October 22 to address this ongoing concern?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me applaud the member opposite for his ongoing commitment to reduce poverty in this province. Poverty reduction is not a partisan issue. I don't think there is one person in this Legislature who thinks that current levels of poverty are acceptable. So I want to say thank you to the member opposite for your concern, for your advocacy. Once again, I say our poverty reduction strategy is on course to be released by the end of the year, and I look forward to that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The time allotted for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Balbir Dhatt, mother of Manjit Kundhal, died in Versa-Care Centre, a Rexdale long-term-care home, on June 10, 2008, and her body was left on her bed for 14 hours in the sweltering heat because a doctor was unavailable to issue a death certificate;

"Whereas the hot temperature that day left Dhatt's body in a condition which meant last religious rights could not be performed in accordance with Sikh tradition—a great insult to the departed soul;

"Whereas this incident has left Dhatt's family in a state of shock and mental agony and unable to reconcile with the fact that this shameful act occurred in a province like Ontario;

"Whereas Ontario is the only province where the Ombudsman does not have the jurisdiction to investigate hospitals and long-term-care homes;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Ontario's Ombudsman be given the power to investigate hospitals and long-term-care homes."

I agree with this petition and I am signing it.

1150

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Mike Colle: I want to wish everybody a Happy Thanksgiving, and think of those who are without this weekend in their thanksgiving celebrations.

I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the federal government gives more support for economic development, health care and infrastructure to other parts of Canada, and unemployed workers in Ontario get less employment insurance support than in other parts of Canada;

"Whereas the federal system of taxes and equalization extracts over \$20 billion from the people of Ontario every year above and beyond what Ottawa invests in Ontario;

"Whereas laid-off workers in Ontario get \$4,630 less in employment insurance than they would get if they lived in another part of Canada;

"Whereas federal health care money is supposed to be divided equally among all Canadians, but right now Ontario residents are shortchanged by \$773 million per year;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that the federal government stop gouging the people of Ontario and treat them fairly."

I support this petition, and I affix my name to it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you very much, Speaker, especially for the commercial. It's Streetsville's 150th anniversary year.

I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly that's been provided to me by many patients who have visited some of the local doctors in the area. It reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre

located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

It's an excellent petition. I'm pleased to sign and support it and ask page Tamika to carry it for me.

BEER RETAILING AND DISTRIBUTION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to read a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham, which reads as follows:

"Whereas the current system, practice and arrangement of retailing and distributing beer in the province of Ontario—and more specifically, the 'near monopoly' of The Beer Store—severely restricts the accessibility, convenience and choice for retail consumers of beer in Ontario; and

"Whereas The Beer Store 'near monopoly' is controlled by 'for-profit, foreign-owned companies' and these companies are not accountable to the people of Ontario, and these companies do not act in the best interests of the people of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That legislation be introduced that will permit the retailing and distribution of beer through alternative and additional grocery and supermarket retail channels that will fairly compete with The Beer Store, thereby allowing an accessible, convenient, safe, well-regulated and environmentally responsible retailing environment for beer to become established in the province of Ontario."

I'm pleased to present this to the Legislature through Imaan.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition here of hundreds of names from the good people of the Lawrence Veterinary Clinic my riding near Bathurst and Lawrence. What they did is, they got names on this petition for me. It's in support of the Provincial Animal Welfare Act, Bill 50.

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act has not been updated since 1919;

"Whereas Bill 50 would require all veterinarians to report suspected abuse and neglect, protecting veterinarians from liability;

"Whereas it would allow the OSPCA to inspect and investigate places where animals are kept;

"Whereas the bill would prohibit the training of animals to fight;

"Whereas Bill 50 would allow the OSPCA to inspect roadside zoos;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 50, entitled the Provincial Animal Welfare Act, 2008, to protect our animal friends."

I fully support the good people at the Lawrence Veterinary Clinic and all those who support animal welfare protection. I've put my name to it.

SEXUAL REASSIGNMENT SURGERY

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present another petition. It's actually a busy time of year for petitions. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the previous Progressive Conservative government determined sex change operations were not a medical spending priority and instead chose to invest in essential health care services; and

"Whereas Premier McGuinty said in 2004 that funding for sex change operations was not a priority of his government; and

"Whereas the current Liberal government has eliminated and reduced OHIP coverage for chiropractic, optometry and physiotherapy services; and

"Whereas the present shortage of doctors and nurses, troubling waiting times for emergency services and other treatments, operational challenges at many hospitals, as well as a crisis in our long-term-care homes signify the current government has not met their health care commitments;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario does not fund sex change operations under OHIP and instead concentrates its priorities on essential health services and directs our health care resources to improve patient care for Ontarians."

I'm pleased to present this petition to page Paige.

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased to join with my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora and present this petition to the Parliament of Ontario, which has been signed by quite a few people here from my home city of Mississauga. On their behalf I'll read it. It says:

"Whereas the legacy of Pope John Paul II reflects his lifelong commitment to international understanding, peace and the defence of equality and human rights;

"Whereas his legacy has an all-embracing meaning that is particularly relevant to Canada's multi-faith and multicultural traditions;

"Whereas, as one of the great spiritual leaders of contemporary times, Pope John Paul II visited Ontario during his pontificate of more than 25 years and, on his visits, was enthusiastically greeted by Ontario's diverse religious and cultural communities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to grant speedy passage into law of the private member's bill An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day."

I'm pleased to affix my signature and support this petition and to ask page Lauren to carry it for me.

BEER RETAILING AND DISTRIBUTION

Mr. John O'Toole: With this new timetable in the Legislature, it's often we get more petitions in because there's nobody here. I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current system, practice and arrangement of retailing and distributing beer in the province of Ontario—and more specifically, the 'near monopoly' of The Beer Store—severely restricts the accessibility, convenience and choice for retail consumers of beer in Ontario; and

"Whereas The Beer Store 'near monopoly' is controlled by 'for-profit, foreign-owned companies' and these companies are not accountable to the people of Ontario, and these companies do not act in the best interests of the people of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That legislation be introduced that will permit the retailing and distribution of beer through alternative and additional grocery and supermarket retail channels that will fairly compete with The Beer Store, thereby allowing an accessible, convenient, safe, well-regulated and environmentally responsible retailing environment for beer to become established in the province of Ontario."

I'm pleased to sign this petition and present it to Maylee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I remind members that petitions is the time when we read petitions and not get into any debate on them, and that you can even edit them so they're shorter and you can get more in.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Mike Colle: At least some members really honour the opportunity to read petitions. We think—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I just talked about editorializing.

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It's in support of Bill 56, the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act.

"Whereas innocent people are being victimized by the growing number of unlawful firearms in our communities; and

"Whereas police officers, military personnel and lawfully licensed persons are the only people allowed to possess firearms; and

"Whereas a growing number of unlawful firearms are transported, smuggled and found in motor vehicles; and

"Whereas impounding motor vehicles and suspending driver's licences of persons possessing unlawful firearms in motor vehicles would aid the police in their efforts to make our streets safer;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 56, entitled the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act, 2008, into law, so that we can

reduce the number of crimes involving firearms in our communities.”

I fully support this petition and I give it to page Tamika.

SEXUAL REASSIGNMENT SURGERY

Mr. John O'Toole: I'll be as brief as this petition allows me. It does read as follows:

“Whereas the previous Progressive Conservative government determined sex change operations were not a medical spending priority and instead chose to invest in essential health care services; and

“Whereas Premier McGuinty said in 2004 that funding for sex change operations was not a priority of his government; and

“Whereas the current Liberal government has eliminated and reduced OHIP coverage for chiropractic, optometry and physiotherapy services; and

“Whereas the present shortage of doctors and nurses, troubling waiting times for emergency services and other treatment, operational challenges at many hospitals, as well as a crisis in our long-term-care homes signify the current government has not met their health care commitments;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the government of Ontario does not fund sex change operations under OHIP and instead concentrates its priorities and resources on essential health services and directs our health care resources to improve overall patient care for Ontarians.”

I'm pleased to sign this and present it to Maylee, wishing to—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Petitions?

SOCIAL SERVICES FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'll just read the petition. This is a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It is signed by people who are mostly from Richmond Hill. It's entitled “Fairness for Families in the 905 Belt” and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the population of the greater Toronto region will increase by an estimated four million more people in the next generation, with the bulk of that growth coming in the 905 belt of fast-growing cities located north, east and west of Metro Toronto; and

“Whereas these cities are already large and dynamic population units, with big-city issues and big-city needs, requiring big-city resources to implement big-city solutions to social issues and human services needs;

“Whereas the 2007-08 Ontario budget proposes aggressive and badly needed increases in operating funding to build and strengthen capacity in developmental and social services agencies and to invest in helping the young, the weak, the needy and the vulnerable; and

“Whereas the social and human services sectors in the 905 belt have historically received per capita funding far below that of other regions despite facing far greater growth in the populations they serve, and this per capita funding gap has increased in the last four years;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the ... Ontario budget implementing measures to strengthen Ontario's families be passed without delay, and that the first priority for the allocation of new funding in meeting the government of Ontario's commitment to fairness for families flow to the social services agencies serving cities within the 905 belt, and that funding for programs to serve the 905 belt be allocated to established or growing agencies located within the 905 belt.”

I couldn't have said it any better myself. I'm pleased to sign and support the petition, and to give it to page Timothy to carry.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The time for petitions has expired. This House is adjourned until 1 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1204 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL SERVICES FUNDING

Mrs. Julia Munro: The McGuinty government is spending a lot of time talking about fairness in funding to Ontario. Maybe they should start thinking about fairness in funding within Ontario.

Areas of high population growth, such as my riding, are constantly underfunded by this Liberal government. The health and social service needs of my constituents are not being met.

Here are just a few examples from the Central LHIN. For every dollar spent on health care in Ontario, residents in most of my riding get less than 76 cents; CCAC funding, \$1 for Ontario and 93 cents for my residents; community mental health funding, \$1 for Ontario and 80 cents for my riding. Addiction funding is only 20 cents on the dollar.

This government needs to put in place a funding model based on need. It must understand that high-growth areas deserve equal support. I don't think the health needs of my constituents are worth less than those of other Ontarians. It's time for the government to start providing equal funding for the health needs of every family in Ontario.

CONFEDERATION PARKWAY BRIDGE

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I was honoured to attend the recent opening of the new Confederation Parkway Bridge, half of which is in my riding of Mississauga—

Brampton South. This new bridge links Mississauga City Centre to neighbourhoods north of Highway 403. It's a people-friendly bridge that features walking and bike lanes, allowing many of my constituents access to the city centre and Square One shopping centre without having to use their cars.

More importantly, the opening this bridge shows what can be accomplished if different levels of government work together for a better community. This bridge could not have been built without the joint efforts of the Ontario Ministry of Transportation, the transportation and works commissioner, Mayor McCallion and the city of Mississauga, and everyone at GO Transit.

Again, the Confederation Parkway Bridge has become a reality because all levels of government formed key partnerships and worked together for the good of the community. I'm very proud of my community for this accomplishment.

MUNICIPALITIES

Mr. John O'Toole: It was with great fanfare that the McGuinty government came to the 2008 conference of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and announced \$1.1 billion in additional funding for Ontario municipalities. Media reports at that time quoted the Premier as saying, "The economic challenges we are facing this year means I can safely predict that I will not make this same announcement 12 months from now."

It appears that this government knew about the looming economic crisis and had cause to hold up an emergency debate—has been withheld by the Premier.

From Premier McGuinty's own statement, we have some idea of what the provincial finances for 2009 will look like. He's already said that he won't have the money.

For municipalities, it means they can't count on the \$1-billion bailout next August. What are municipal councils to do in the plight when forming their budgets?

It's time for the McGuinty government to tell the whole story on Ontario's finances. Unfortunately, even the emergency debate taking place in the House yesterday and today is more like a political stunt than an effective way of communicating to Ontarians who are losing their jobs and pensions or who are unable to keep their homes afloat.

This is what happens when Ontario governs by photo ops. We deserve better than that in Ontario.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Today we are joined by Ms. Manjit Kundhal in the west gallery. Today I presented her petition calling for Ontario's Ombudsman to have more power to investigate hospitals and long-term-care facilities.

Over 1,800 people signed that petition. She was moved to carry out this work, to get those signatures,

because of the terrible experience she and her family had in a long-term-care facility this past summer.

Her mother died and was left in bed for 14 hours without a death certificate. There was no doctor to sign that death certificate. In the high heat, the body decomposed to the point where it could not receive the proper Sikh religious rites for burial. Ms. Kundhal and her whole family were devastated.

Everyone in this chamber knows the pain of losing someone in your household, but even worse is if you can't give them proper funeral arrangements, proper funeral treatment. This family knows that kind of pain.

Ms. Kundhal and our NDP health critic, France Gélinas, have called for expanded powers of the Ombudsman in order that incidents like these—and this is a glaring example—can be opened up by someone who is responsive to the public, and that pressure can be applied so that we will have change in this province so that people do not have to go through what Ms. Kundhal's family went through.

RIDING OF ETOBICOKE NORTH

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: As you will appreciate, the Ontario conversation is revolving, quite justifiably, around the economy and income security, with reference to pensions. The McGuinty government has anticipated this, and has attempted to deal strategically with a number of investments, initiatives and programs over our entire mandate, not merely as a response to this particular fiasco or crisis that's washing through the global markets.

In particular, for example, with reference to the economy, some programs have benefited my community in Etobicoke North: the \$1.5 billion for the skills-to-jobs action plan; and the \$1.15 billion Next Generation of Jobs Fund. These have led to institutions such as Micro-Skills, for example, within my riding, which a number of my residents have benefited from in terms of skills training and upgrading to make them more marketable and saleable in the workplace.

I'll make reference as well to Move Ontario 2020, which, as you will know, is a multi-year, \$17.5-billion plan, and this will be part of the transportation which will go into the Woodbine Live! Entertainment, which is basically the creation of a mini-Disneyland right in Woodbine. It is a \$1.5-billion expansion, with hotels and conference centres: an extraordinary economic boost to my community.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Ms. Laurie Scott: I rise this afternoon to talk about the serious concerns Ontarians have about the economic storm under the McGuinty Liberals.

Yesterday we witnessed the Liberal version of dealing with the crisis: that is, put forward a last-minute, partisan debate where the Premier and the Minister of Finance "promise to listen." We know what McGuinty promises

mean, so I'm quite certain there's not much listening going on over there.

In dealing with the economic storm facing Ontario, the Premier recited such musings as, "There's no better place to find shelter in the storm than right here in Ontario." Well, the storm is here, and despite the Premier's own words about Ontario being the place to find shelter, he's off to Mexico. Just last week, the Premier felt that the Minister of Health Promotion was qualified enough to attend the launch of the Pan-Am games bid, but suddenly, while an economic crisis looms, and the Premier himself has called a so-called open debate in the Legislature where he promised to listen, his Minister of Health Promotion has suddenly become unqualified. His Minister of Trade is in the Middle East—apparently, she's up to the job—yet the Premier doesn't feel his own Minister of Health Promotion, whom he appointed to the position of being responsible for matters of this nature, is up to the job.

When it comes to dealing with the economic crisis, the Premier stated just yesterday, "I want to assure the people of Ontario that we are in your corner"—except when any excuse to get out of Ontario during a crisis becomes available. It's clear the Premier's apparent get-up-and-go just got up and went.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The member for Mississauga South.

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JONATHAN HOWARD

Mr. Charles Sousa: I rise today to recognize the efforts of an extraordinary young man from my riding of Mississauga South. Jonathan Howard has undertaken the monumental challenge of running across Canada to raise awareness of children's autism and to generate \$2.5 million for the cause. His 8,500-kilometre journey, called "Run the Dream," began on March 25 in St. John's, Newfoundland, and is scheduled to end in Victoria, British Columbia, on December 31, in time for some well-deserved champagne.

Jonathan's long and difficult journey is made possible by an outstanding team of volunteers and sponsors to whom I would like to express my thanks.

Autism affects an estimated one in 165 people in Canada and is a lifelong condition. The funds Jonathan is raising will go towards research and supporting families affected by autism.

Jonathan was joined by his good friend Terry Robinson for the Ottawa-to-Winnipeg leg of the journey. Himself a former Paralympian, Terry is no stranger to this kind of challenge.

On July 25, Run the Dream passed through Jonathan's hometown of Mississauga, and I had the pleasure of being there to welcome him and his team home. While speaking with him, I was struck by his passion, dedication and selflessness. On behalf of the many who support Jonathan in this journey, we celebrate his

remarkable achievement. We congratulate him and wish him continued success in this most worthy cause. Thank you, Jonathan.

HUBERT SABOURIN

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: Je désire aujourd'hui rendre hommage à un de mes commettants, M. Hubert Sabourin, propriétaire de Sanilit ltée d'Alexandria. En effet, jeudi dernier, le 2 octobre, M. Sabourin a été nommé Citoyen de l'année au tout premier Gala de Glengarry Nord. J'ai eu l'honneur d'accompagner l'honorable John Gerretsen, qui lui a remis le certificat de mérite du premier ministre, l'honorable Dalton McGuinty.

Mr. Sabourin, a businessman of North Glengarry, was proclaimed Citizen of the Year for his generous contribution to the Glengarry Memorial Hospital, to which he donated \$150,000 for the purchase of an ultrasound machine. Mr. Sabourin also invented a dust filter that can eliminate particle emissions from some of the world's worst polluting industries.

Eight more awards were presented to the following for their contributions to the community: the Glengarry Highland Games Committee; Lanthier Bakery; Tom and Luke Murray; Kelsey MacDonald; Donat Wissell; the Kippen family farm; Bob Linney; and Jacqueline Fraser.

Félicitations à tous les récipiendaires et organisateurs de cette belle soirée.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I rise in this House today to speak about fairness for Ontario. Last Friday in London, myself, Minister Bentley and Minister Matthews were joined by Mayor Anne Marie DeCicco-Best, as well as London city councillors, at the press conference we held regarding the Fairness for Ontario campaign.

We held the press conference in order to reach out to Ontarians as to what we are asking Ottawa for. We are asking Ottawa to allow Ontario to keep a bit more of what we send to them. We know that Ontario gives to the federal government more than \$20 billion per year for distribution to the rest of the country. When broken down, each Ontarian sends \$1,850 that is being given to other parts of the country for things such as social programs, education, health care, infrastructure, employment insurance, and much more. I believe it's time that Ontario gets its fair share so that all Canadians can have access to the same quality of health care, education, employment insurance, infrastructure and social programs.

We got support from the city councillors and the mayor, and I guess this campaign is going further to reach out to all Ontarians to educate them about fairness for Ontario. I hope all the people across the province hear us and come out and support us, because it's fair game in order to get our share from the federal government.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

AUDITOR GENERAL AMENDMENT ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE VÉRIFICATEUR GÉNÉRAL

Mrs. Munro moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 110, An Act to amend the Auditor General Act /
Projet de loi 110, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le vérificateur
général.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Does the member wish to make a short statement?

Mrs. Julia Munro: Yes. This bill amends the Auditor General Act to provide for the Auditor General to report, in his or her annual report to the Legislative Assembly, on circumstances where money was expended for the provision of programs or services without due regard to the equitable provision of those services or programs in all geographic areas in Ontario.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. Brad Duguid: On behalf of the House leader, I move the following motion: That, starting Wednesday October 15, 2008, the Standing Committee on Estimates be authorized to take the remaining unconsidered estimates referred to in the following order: Ministry of Agriculture and Food; Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities; Ministry of Energy; Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal; Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing; and that the committee be authorized to present its report, pursuant to standing order 63(a), no later than Thursday, November 27, 2008.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I think we're going to back up just a bit in process. That was a motion without notice, so you have to ask unanimous consent to introduce it. Would you ask that now?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I would so ask.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): It has been requested. Agreed? Agreed. Now, motion again?

Interjection: Dispense.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Dispense. We've heard the motion. Agreed? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

MILK IN SCHOOLS

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario, specifically the

Ministry of Education, should collaborate with the Dairy Farmers of Ontario to expand the elementary school milk program across Ontario's publicly funded schools, so more of Ontario's students can enjoy the benefits of healthy, local milk.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Dhillon has moved private members' notice of motion 50. Pursuant to standing order 97, Mr. Dhillon, you have up to 12 minutes.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: It is my honour to stand before this House and graciously ask for the support of this resolution. The elementary school milk program, known as the ESMP, is an important step to ensure that our children continue on the road to healthy living. This program has the capacity to impact the life of every child in Ontario. The ESMP was launched in 1987 to provide nutritious, fresh, and easy-to-access milk to elementary school students on a daily basis. The Dairy Farmers of Ontario and our local processors are making sure that milk is affordable and they are providing it to schools at greatly reduced prices when compared to retail pricing.

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This is a very ambitious project. However, as with any ambitious project, it can only be successful with the support and partnerships we create. I am proud of the efforts of our local processors. I am proud of the efforts made by the Dairy Farmers of Ontario. I am proud of the work that the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health Promotion and this House are doing in encouraging our youth to be more healthy and active.

I wish to acknowledge some members who are here today to listen to this very important debate. These people have spearheaded the ESMP program and, more importantly, have played an active role in encouraging our youth to eat healthy and be more active. I wish to acknowledge the representatives from the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario. Their good work can never be overlooked. Year after year, the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario continues to be an important advocate of children, and I thank them very much for their efforts.

I also wish to acknowledge and welcome the Dairy Farmers of Ontario. I thank them for their continued support. The DFO have not just supported children drinking milk with mere words; their actions speak much louder. On September 24, in honour of World School Milk Day, all participating Ontario elementary schools received complimentary milk. This represents over 800,000 servings of milk. What a great endeavour. This shows us that it is possible to deliver milk to all participating schools, while encouraging our young children to drink healthy local milk.

Currently, the ESMP covers approximately 70% of our elementary schools in Ontario. However, only 25% of students in those schools participate in the program. This has definitely got to change. It can't be done without the hard work and support of the citizens of Ontario. There needs to be a better understanding of the importance that milk has in a healthy and well-balanced diet.

It is our responsibility to teach the next generation good and healthy living habits. There is a growing epidemic of obesity among our youth. Our children have stopped being as active as previous generations. Our government has been taking active steps to stop this trend. This is why I believe that it is so important to start our young on the right path from day one. That means that children should be active, children should eat fruits and vegetables, children should drink healthy milk. It is time for us to wean our children off their dependency on junk food, which is what this government has done and continues to encourage. Our children are our most precious resource. They should not be burdened with diseases such as diabetes that in many cases can be prevented at their age with a balanced and healthy lifestyle.

We, as members of this Legislature and leaders of this province, need to go back to our constituencies with a united and common message that our children come first. We need to encourage local school boards, individual schools, educators and, most importantly, parents to continue our commitment to nutrition in school and at home. However, this cannot be accomplished only by encouraging our young to drink milk. There need to be continued efforts made by educators and parents to drive this message of being healthy, active and eating well to our children. I believe that we're getting there.

Good nutrition is vital to a child's growth, development and well-being. Research studies time and time again tell us that children are able to concentrate better and learn more effectively when they are well nourished. According to the Dietitians of Canada, roughly one third of a child's daily food intake occurs during school hours. When children arrive at school hungry or exposed to unhealthy food choices, they are less ready and able to learn and are at risk of developing chronic illnesses such as heart disease and diabetes later in life. The ESMP program will help students perform better in school and develop better eating habits that contribute to their long-term health.

I am a very strong supporter of this resolution and I encourage all my colleagues, members, to adopt this resolution.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased today to rise to speak to the resolution introduced by the member from Brampton West, which states that the government of Ontario "should collaborate with the Dairy Farmers of Ontario to expand the elementary school milk program"—and I couldn't agree more. This program has made it easier for parents to ensure their children are getting the nutrition they need and is teaching our kids good, healthy eating habits at a very young age. Already the milk program is a big success, and I think that we should work to ensure that more Ontario students can enjoy and benefit from milk.

A few weeks ago, on September 24, we celebrated World School Milk Day. Although this day was only created in 2000, there are already 40 countries partici-

pating and giving students nutritious milk at school that day. The Dairy Farmers of Ontario, with the assistance of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, offered complimentary milk to students at every school in Ontario. I know some of the schools in Oxford participated, like Algonquin Public School, and they were very grateful to the dairy farmers. Across Ontario, there were close to one million students who received free milk that day. I think it's great to introduce students and parents to the benefits of the elementary school milk program and to teach students about good nutrition and the benefits of milk.

In the 30 years since the elementary school milk program was created, it has expanded to include approximately 2,800 schools across the province, and that's an incredible achievement. It means that about 70% of the schools in Ontario offer students easy access to fresh milk. I want to congratulate the Dairy Farmers of Ontario on that accomplishment and commend them for all the work that they have done to ensure the program's success.

I know that there are a number of dairy farmers in the gallery today, and I want to welcome them all to the Legislature and thank them for coming out and supporting this bill. I especially want to thank John Palmer, who happens to be a milk producer in the great riding of Oxford county and represents the dairy producers in Oxford county very well on the Dairy Farmers of Ontario board of directors. As you know, Oxford county is the dairy capital of Ontario. We no longer have the most cows, but we still produce the most milk of any county in the province. Obviously, we don't have much, but we produce better than anyone else.

I want to dwell on a few other things. Today, we are in the middle of the 10th annual Agriculture Week. I want to take a minute to recognize the contributions of our dairy farmers and all farmers in this province. In Ontario, we are lucky to have so much fresh, locally grown food available. I think many people take that for granted and forget the hard work that our farmers do to provide us with that food. Dairy farmers are a perfect example. The rest of us may be looking forward to the long weekend for Thanksgiving, but the cows will still need to be milked and fed, and on Tuesday morning, when we get up to put cream in our coffee or students want milk for lunchtime, thanks to the dairy farmers it will be there. I know that in order to be here today, many of these farmers will have been up at 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning to do chores before leaving for Toronto to be here in time for this gathering.

However, I think it's important to recognize that farmers in Ontario are facing serious challenges. Input costs are increasing, farmers are dealing with too much red tape, and the average age of farmers is disturbingly high. I do want to comment that I am happy that farmers are getting to be old. The alternative to not getting old is not a very attractive alternative.

Earlier this week, a group of young farmers came to the Legislature to mark the beginning of Agriculture Week. They were here to deliver a message to the min-

ister that they need more support to ensure that agriculture in Ontario has a future. One of the people who was here is a 16-year-old named Travis Murray. He wants to be a farmer, but his father is trying to talk him out of it because he knows how hard it is for farmers to survive in Ontario. We need to ensure that the agriculture industry is one that is attracting young people and that we are providing the support and the strong future that will help them not only enter the industry but succeed and become the next generation of farmers.

As we move forward, one of the keys to success in agriculture will continue to be innovation. I know that there are some dairy farmers in Oxford who are already great examples of successful innovation: people like Steven Veldman of Velrob Farms in Embro, who developed a system that helped change the flow characteristics of cold water and milk to ensure optimum cooling before the milk enters the bulk tank—that change improved the plate cooler efficiency by 50%; and innovators like Dave Older of Viewland Farms in Thamesford, who adopted an innovative bedding system from Minnesota which has improved animal health, created an excellent compost material and decreased labour costs.

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The elementary school milk program is another great example of innovation from the agricultural community. By providing detailed practical information for schools on how to set up this program—and even helping to provide refrigerators—the dairy farmers have found an easy and low-cost way to ensure that our students are getting the health benefits of drinking fresh milk every day. They have made it much easier for parents to provide a healthy option at lunch, and they are benefiting our schools by contributing to nutrition to help every child learn. So I want to again congratulate the Dairy Farmers of Ontario on creating and building this successful program. I'm pleased to support the goal of expanding the program and ensuring that all Ontarian schoolchildren will have access to fresh milk every day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm pleased to speak to this resolution, pleased to support it in some ways and want to raise some concerns, which I'm hoping the member has thought about—and other government members and, indeed, all the members of this Legislature. Because there are some concerns.

The positives are that it's a motion that broadens the program to provide schools with access to reasonably priced milk. It encourages children to drink more milk, and we know that attending school on a full belly is fundamental to being able to learn. Revenues for dairy farmers are increased in this particular case, which would help the struggling rural economy in Ontario, and I say in this regard that we recognize that the dairy industry is, and will continue to be, an important part of our province's economy. So the promotion of milk in our elementary schools is a reasonable request to be making, but I'm hoping that we see that as a part of a large-scale

overall nutrition initiative, because simply selling milk in the schools does not even begin to address the nutrition problems that many of our students are facing.

We know, based on the Toronto Star dated October 7, that when seven principals from the northwest part of Toronto were asked what they wanted most to have in the schools to improve student learning, what they needed most was food. Giving access to nutritional foods was what they said was critical in their schools. They suggested that a lot of kids go to school without eating because they can't afford it or because they're rushed to school, and for whatever reason, if they're not eating, it's going to affect their learning.

We know it's an important issue, and yes, milk is a part of it, but it isn't the whole picture, so we need to address it in a much more wholesome way. There's a range of products needed in order to meet the needs of our diverse population. The other question is, should we be selling milk, however reasonable, versus should we be making it available for free so that the majority of kids who can't afford it have access to it, rather than those who can pay for it? We should be asking those questions, and we should be answering them, because "reasonably priced" is a reasonable request to be making, but if you can't afford it, is that not a problem for those students who do not have access to food and therefore are not learning as best they can?

So the issue of "free" becomes a question that the government member might want to speak to, and indeed the Minister of Education, who is here. The member from Brampton West mentioned the government student nutrition program, but I remind him and others that it depends on the fine work of many volunteers around the province, and that this program is simply inadequately supported. The government support of this student nutrition program is about 15% to 20% of the cost. The rest comes from private sector initiatives and, as I said, from the many volunteers who make it work. So as valuable as this program is, it is underfunded by the government, and we should be speaking about whether or not we should, as a government, be increasing our portion in order to be able to give access to young people who need it. Yes, milk can and should be a part of it. But I do remind the member, and I'm sure he knows, that some students are lactose intolerant. I say "some" because I don't know the figure. But I'm told there are a lot of young people, middle-aged people and seniors who are lactose intolerant. That includes particularly people of First Nations, Asian, African and Jewish backgrounds. So for that community, for those students, milk is not their product. It is not nutritious for them. In fact, it's dangerous to them. Many of the students have allergic reactions to milk. So, as good as it can be for some, it may not be for others. That's why I argue you've got to make it part of an overall initiative. In this regard, we have to worry about the positives of this resolution and some of the negatives.

I ask the member from Brampton West—and the Minister of Education is here—when we put pressure on

the Minister of Education with a resolution of this kind, what other industry is going to be following on its heels to say, "We've got something to offer, too. We want to come and talk to the minister because we believe we offer a nutritious diet or nutritious product. We want to encourage you, Minister of Education, to make sure that we are getting our products into the system as well"? The Minister of Education—I don't know, but she is here, and maybe she will comment on what I'm saying, because it seems that she's puzzled by my remarks.

Hon. Brad Duguid: She's in favour of milk.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: She's in favour of milk.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The minister is going to have an opportunity to speak to the concerns I've raised. I'm glad you're here, because, Minister, I know you were chatting with the other minister. I don't begrudge that; it's just that you may not have heard what I said.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I heard what you said. It made no sense.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Then the other minister will stand up to speak to the concerns that I have raised. I'm hoping to hear another point of view from two illustrious ministers in this House who are nodding in disagreement with what I'm saying. Please, stand up and take some of the time to address my concern, which is that many students are lactose intolerant and many students have allergic reactions to milk. Ministers, now that you've heard me repeat it, you might want to speak to that. That's why I said that milk is one component of a larger nutrition issue that we should be talking about. I think you should be speaking to it.

The other question to the two illustrious ministers who are here—one, the Minister of Education, the other a former trustee with the Toronto board—do you think that milk, if we're going to offer it as one component, should be free, versus selling it to those who can't afford it? You're here; perhaps you can comment on that.

You, Minister of Education, as I said to you earlier, contribute 15% to 20% of the school nutrition program. Do you think you should increase your amount, given your knowledge about how important it is for young people to have a meal, a nutritious breakfast, before they get into the school system? Your contribution is a very tiny one. You might want to speak to that. Should the milk be free? Can we encourage and should we be encouraging all of the industries to come and lobby you to have some other nutritious food be introduced in the school system? These are the questions I ask the Minister of Education, who's here, and the member from Brampton West, as we deliberate on this resolution. I think the resolution is an acceptable one to me. I'm only raising questions that I hope others can answer and make me feel at ease.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member from Hamilton Mountain.

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: On a point of order, if I could: It is absolutely my pleasure to introduce to this House some of the dynamic students from St. Jean de Brébeuf in my riding of Hamilton Mountain.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): As you know, it's not a point of order, but welcome to Queen's Park.

Further debate?

1340

Mr. Bob Delaney: I would like to join with all of those who have welcomed the Dairy Farmers of Ontario here to the Legislature. For me, it's a very special welcome. In the five years that I've had the privilege and the responsibility of speaking on behalf of people in western Mississauga, they are one of many fine organizations that I'm also proud to call my constituents. So, gentlemen, welcome to Queen's Park. It's really a pleasure to have you.

I also want to say a few words about not merely my seatmate, not merely my colleague, but my friend, the member for Brampton West. This is just one of many initiatives that the member for Brampton West has brought before this House on matters that concern people in his community. These are substantive matters. He has spoken on behalf of the Knights Table, which is, again, another initiative about nutrition; he has introduced legislation regarding the regulation of temp agencies; he has worked hard on the Heart and Stroke Foundation in his community; and he has worked with his son on a battery recycling program.

This is a man who has stood up on behalf of people in his community and talked about many of the things that truly do matter. In fact, in his work with the Knights Table, there were, in fact, babies who needed milk as clients of the Knights Table, and I'm sure that this is part of the reason that has led to the presentation of this resolution.

We cannot understate the role that milk plays in the diet of children. There are any number of good reasons for being healthy, for eating well and for being active, and milk is a part of all of that. All of the major dairy producers support this particular resolution, as do I. I would only note that drinking milk, for a child, comes at a time when growth occurs in spurts. A good, balanced diet, of which milk is a big part, helps combat obesity, helps build strong bones, helps underline the importance of a healthy diet and gets you into the habit of doing the right things at a time when doing the right things will just become a habit; it will be almost unnatural not to do them.

Before I finish my remarks today, I am reminded in this, the 150th anniversary year of the village of Streetsville, where we've been talking about what life was like 150 years ago. My colleague the member for Oxford said, "I'm glad that farmers are getting old." A visit to some of our heritage cemeteries confirms many of the things he said, where people who would normally be the age that many of us are in this chamber simply didn't make it; that was about the end of your natural life. Today, with all of the advances in modern science and modern medicine, we can still come back to the basics: a healthy lifestyle, eating right and drinking milk when you're young.

This is a fine resolution, and I'm pleased to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise and speak on the motion that's brought forward today by the member from Brampton West: that, basically, the Dairy Farmers of Ontario and the Ministry of Education should collaborate to expand this benefit to Ontario students for healthy local milk. I'd like to recognize, as we all have done who have spoken today, the many members of the Dairy Farmers of Ontario who are in the gallery and who joined us today, and the people from the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario. I'm sure that many of my colleagues in the Legislature were down for the very nutritious, dairy-based lunch that was provided for us before we came into the Legislature. I'm very pleased to recognize the generosity and the hard work of the dairy farmers in the province of Ontario. They offer, every day, thousands and thousands of school kids a healthy serving of fresh milk.

I also want to point out that September 24 was World School Milk Day. I know that the members on this side of the House certainly recognized the contribution of Ontario dairy farmers on that day. The members of the government were just catching up on that today to recognize World School Milk Day. But it is very important when we say "World School Milk Day" because, as you can see from many of the advertisements on TV—I have the milk producers' magazine in front of me, Functional Foods—people are becoming more aware of the health benefits from dairy products. I certainly know that my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock depends on its agriculture industry and the products that our farmers and producers provide. The farmers and agriculture professionals in the riding are one of the chief sources of incomes, jobs and economic dependents that are in the riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. I know Farmers Feed Cities is still prevalent on many T-shirts and signs throughout my riding. Ontario farmers do provide world class, healthy products to Ontarians young and old.

I have a role as an opposition critic for health promotion also and many of you know that I'm also a registered nurse. I certainly agree with my colleagues in promoting healthy choices and healthy diets for kids that have a positive impact on their lives now, but which also prevent illness and health issues later on. That goes hand in hand with encouraging more physical activity and proper education about health and physical activities. The Dairy Farmers of Ontario have been working hard in providing great leadership for this school milk program currently in the province.

But they go much further. They provide educational programs for our young people in school. I know many of the dairy farmers go into the classrooms in my schools and educate the young people who, less and less, are coming from farms, certainly, with the number of farmers that we're losing in the province. Dairy Farmers of Ontario, the DFO: Their current contribution to the

milk program and other nutritional education programs is some \$2.4 million, which is not a small amount of money on their part. They're very committed to doing much more, if the provincial government is willing to join them. The DFO deserves much recognition in making it their priority to work with the province and the students of our province on this worthy goal.

I've had the opportunity to speak to many dairy farmers in my riding—I'm sure the most famous being Lloyd Wicks, and many of the members in the gallery will know Lloyd—on the various ways we can think outside the box on introducing more dairy products that are made with milk from cows that are fed a diet with DHA omega-3. They want to expand that milk program to include milk from cows that are fed a diet with DHA omega-3, which is instrumental—we've heard said today—in the development of brain, eyes and nerves in the critical years of youth and physical development. There's lots of science-based proof for this and the good works that it does, if we can get to the children at critical ages and provide them with a diet with DHA omega-3 in their dairy products.

You see functional foods out there with the attention on this growing market of people wanting to eat healthier. Lloyd had a roundtable in my riding on his farm—Grasshill Farm—to which many of my colleagues came. We heard from a great presenter, John Kelly, who is part of the research group, which is just up the way at MaRS Landing, and who's a strong advocate for DHA omega-3, and the dairy products that contain that. It's not just milk. They're becoming more available in cheese strings, yogurt and he even passed some forms of candy that contain that. That's educating us as legislators to the benefits that are out there.

We need to move this forward. The dairy farmers have been leading the charge for healthy nutrition in the province of Ontario. They're asking the provincial government to certainly take a stronger role. They've been providing fresh milk, and hopefully other dairy products in the near future, as I put that plug in again, as well as nutritional education at an early age. They're helping our Ontario kids be healthy, eat healthy and make healthy lifestyle choices starting so early that they'll affect their kids and our future in the province with making healthy choices, healthy lifestyles, and educating ourselves with what can be brought forward. So I appreciate what the member has brought forward in this motion and to add some comments to this. I'm going to be watching this very closely: how this moves forward through the Legislature. We want this to not just be a time in our 50 minutes today in which we are discussing it, but to get into real action to help the Dairy Farmers of Ontario achieve their goal—and even move beyond that—and make the province of Ontario partners.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: We will be supporting this motion, but we have questions that we think the mover needs to address when he gets his opportunity at the end

of this debate. I grew up in a school where milk was available. It was one of the treats of the day. And I understand that it makes a lot of sense to make sure that children have access to milk, and beyond that, not just milk, but regularly to nutritious food so that they can learn and so that they can develop their academic skills. Now, as my colleague had said, and it's something that needs to be noted in what goes forward out of this Legislature, there are many children who are lactose intolerant. So any program has to recognize that their nutritional needs have to be met as well. I would hope that the mover, and anyone in government who carries this forward, keeps that in mind. That's not to say that milk shouldn't be available, but those who can't drink milk have to be provided with an equivalent nutritious portion of soy milk—whatever.

Mr. John O'Toole: Coke.

1350

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's interesting that I hear comments in the background. I think about milk being part of our heritage. When you look in the Bible, the Promised Land was described as a place of milk and honey, not of pop and chips, and that's what we need for our schools: nutrition.

When you look back at the recent historical record, "Margaret Thatcher, milk snatcher" was a slogan that was used heavily in Britain to describe the anti-child policies of that far-right government. It's something that resonates deeply, emotionally with people. I, like my colleague from Trinity-Spadina, ask the Minister of Education and any other minister who feels free to take up the cause, whether or not the government will be assisting school boards in making sure that children have access to nutritious foods; in fact, beyond that, to making sure that school boards have the resources to ensure that every child is properly fed, every child has that opportunity from early in the morning to actually learn.

I've talked to teachers who have taught in schools where the introduction of school breakfast programs made a huge difference, in terms of academic performance, and frankly just a huge difference in terms of the mood of classrooms. Children who had been disruptive, who had been angry and acting out, were very different when they were fed, when they had had something to eat that actually nourished them, that actually filled their stomachs.

So, my thanks to the member who introduced this. My hope is that he will address some of the questions that have been raised in the course of this debate, and that the Ministry of Education will take on this question of nutrition for children overall and make sure that every child in this province gets an equal start with every other child by making sure they're not hungry when they get to school, and that they're well nourished.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: We were talking about the old days here. I remember that three doors down from my house at St. Clair and Bathurst, they used to have a dairy. That

was before the big conglomerates got together. It was Maple Dale Dairy, I think, just a little micro-dairy. It brought back a bit of memories.

I want to congratulate the member from Brampton West for taking leadership. A lot of people talk about supporting dairy farmers, and a lot of people talk about supporting farmers, but he has put this forward. He has come to the Legislature and put his name on this resolution, and I think that's something to be remembered and certainly appreciated. I think the dairy farmers appreciate that.

It's very important—we have these wonderful young students here from Hamilton. This is about you. In this society today, many of us, including young people, are addicted to all those sweet drinks—all the juices. They drink juice by the gallon. In many cases, it's not even juice; it's just water and sweeteners. The cost of that so-called juice—fruit drinks—is exorbitant. And where does that juice drink come from? It doesn't come from Ontario farmers. Where do the oranges come from? The good thing about milk is that it's local. So it's also good for the environment, because it's grown locally, and it doesn't have all that sugar in it.

One of the real problems we have in Ontario, one of the fastest-growing drivers of our health costs, is diabetes. Type 2 diabetes is going to affect almost 40% of the population. One of the reasons why diabetes is so prevalent is because there is an addiction to all those soda pops and colas, which are advertised non-stop, and all those sugared juices that are also continually promoted. Sometimes, as parents and grandparents, we forget that we've got this incredible treasure in Ontario and Canada called milk. We sometimes fail to appreciate—look at what's happened in China, where they haven't taken care with their milk products—that we have excellent supervision and quality control of our dairy products; the scientific methodology here in Ontario is second to none. So when you're buying milk, you can rest assured that it's safe, it's clean, it's healthy, it's good for you, and it doesn't cause diabetes. Rather than reaching for that expensive, foreign American Coca-Cola or for some tropical fruit juice, reach for something local—milk.

As many have said, it's the best thing for your teeth and bones. It can replace a meal, if you want. Milk is sometimes a forgotten treasure that we have in all parts of Ontario, and it's something we've got to pay a bit more attention to. That's why I'm so happy the member has brought this forward.

As I said earlier, this is an environmentally good product; as you know, we are now talking more and more about eating and shopping locally. When you sit down to Thanksgiving dinner on Sunday or Monday, make sure that those products you sit down to eat are local Ontario products. Make sure there's milk on the table, good Ontario carrots, good Ontario potatoes and good Ontario turkey. It's healthy, tasty and more affordable than all those exotic foreign things we put on our tables, and it's a great opportunity at Thanksgiving.

Ironically, this motion is before us just before Thanksgiving. We don't take time to thank our farmers enough.

We go to the store and take milk off the shelf and never stop to think about the blood, sweat, tears and sacrifice that made it possible. Everything is so automatic in our modern convenience stores that we don't stop and think that it took a lot of effort to put that milk on the store shelf, which we can bring home and feel secure that the milk our children are drinking is safe and good for them.

I know that the member from Trinity-Spadina mentioned the lactose issue. I am somewhat lactose intolerant myself, but what I do is always purchase lactose-free milk, and I have no problem with it. It tastes the same, and I find it's very, very good for me. I still drink a lot of milk. I put it on my cereal; I have glasses of it all the time. In fact, the other speaker was saying we should have more milk available in public places because milk, as an affordability issue, is good value for your money.

If young people are hungry or children are hungry, milk helps fill the gap and doesn't have all the side effects of all that imported Coca-Cola or tropical juices which don't help the local economy, whereas if you drink milk, you're also helping the local economy and helping our local farmers, who, again, go to a great deal of trouble to produce this product that, as I said, we all take for granted.

In terms of our schools, I visited Flemington Public School in my riding. The children in that school come from challenged homes and their income levels are not high, but there is a milk program there. They have milk available for them at lunch. It's a program that makes sure that those children who come from poor families have something that is healthy. It's provided in co-operation with the dairy farmers and the Ministry of Education. Thousands of children across this province get the benefit of that school milk program.

What the member here is advocating is that we look at expanding that program to make it available to more children across our school system and beyond.

I think the member from Trinity-Spadina looked at this with blinders on. I think he's got to be more global in looking at this. What I think our member is trying to say—

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Colle: Well, he's got a more global vision than you do on this issue. He's saying that milk is a good thing; let's try to make it more available.

The member from Trinity-Spadina is too tied up in bureaucracy. He's saying, "Well, what about the minister?" The member from Brampton is saying, "We've got this Ontario treasure that's natural. It's good for you. It's local. Let's make it more available."

The member from Peterborough is a great supporter of our dairy farmers. He goes out of his way to speak out on behalf of dairy farmers, and I'm going to leave 30 seconds for him to talk about Peterborough.

1400

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I just had a meeting with Community Living Peterborough with Madam Meilleur. That's why I'm a bit late coming in.

Two things—strong support for supply management; and exactly 20 years ago, my wife, Karan, a teacher at St. Teresa's Elementary School in Peterborough, introduced a milk program to her students. Why did she do that? She was tired of seeing kids bringing pop to school. She brought in the milk program and it spread to every school in the separate school system in Peterborough. We're very proud of my wife's leadership in that area.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Mr. Dhillon, you have up to two minutes to reply.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I'd like to start off by thanking the members from Mississauga-Streetsville, Eglinton-Lawrence, Peterborough, Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, Oxford, Trinity-Spadina and Toronto-Danforth for their input. I really appreciate and thank the opposition for their opinions and their concerns—some very valid ones from Mr. Tabuns. Absolutely, there needs to be a substitute for milk. Soy milk or goat milk is an incredible substitute. Having visited Agriculture 101, which was hosted by Minister Wilkinson, I learned a lot about goat milk and how similar the processes are and that it is a viable substitute for milk for people who are lactose intolerant.

I also want to say that it's a win-win situation, the issue of milk in our schools: It's good for the economy; it's good for our kids. We are putting them on the right path to becoming healthier individuals. The issue of milk and also of nutrition fits very well with our Premier's agenda of healthier kids and healthier living. So I encourage the House to adopt this resolution and I encourage all parties involved to work towards the ultimate goal of teaching our children to eat properly and to be active.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Before I call the next order, I'm just reminding the people who are watching at home and in the galleries here that we have two more private members' ballot items to be dealt with. This item will be voted on in approximately 100 minutes' time.

Orders of the day.

LEGISLATIVE CHANNEL

Mr. Bob Delaney: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario should request of the government of Canada that an amendment be made to the terms of reference governing the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) to ensure that a condition to the CRTC's granting, or renewal, of a licence to carry cable, wireless, wireless cable or any other type of television content by every distributor in any market is the requirement to broadcast, as part of every basic package of television services or channels, and using a minimum of one dedicated channel, the legislative proceedings of the province or territory in which the distributor of the television content proposes to offer service, as supplied to the distributor by the legislative broadcast service in that province or territory.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Delaney has moved private member's motion number 44. Pursuant to standing order 97, Mr. Delaney, you have up to 12 minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I would like to greet everyone who is watching. I'd like to begin today by paying tribute to the dedicated men and women who operate the Ontario Legislature's broadcast and recording services. Most of them have been here longer than most of us. Many of them will be here, serving Ontarians by broadcasting the proceedings of this Legislature and by recording the proceedings of our committees, long after many of the elected members here today are gone.

For you to be able to watch this, the Ontario Legislature's broadcast and recording services employs a staff of 22 regular and five contract employees. Their hard work and dedication, their effectiveness, brings to Ontarians the minute-by-minute proceedings of their government at work, through the deliberations of the elected representatives that you choose to serve you in every community across this province, and they've done this job for more than 22 years.

I can stand here at my desk and I can speak directly to you, wherever you are. Perhaps you're at home, curled up on your sofa, channel-surfing, and you're wondering what's going on at Queen's Park. Maybe you're sitting in your office. Maybe you're monitoring the activities here for how they may affect you, your industry, your employees and the people you do business with. Maybe this is being rebroadcast, or it has been recorded and played back, and you're saying to someone, "Let's look at this for a few minutes. I'm interested in this issue."

The point is, you can see what the people you elect are doing on your behalf. You can see what they're doing when they're in the legislative chamber, and you can see it unedited and in real time. You can see the Premier and the members of the cabinet on their feet, fielding questions each day that this Legislature sits. You can see the person you elected, speaking on the record for what concerns you, what concerns your family and what concerns your community.

The point is, you don't have to watch, but you can—at least, right now you can. But this might not necessarily be the case in the future. You might not be able to see your government and watch it do business on your behalf in the months and years to come.

This is not a commercial station. There's no host or moderator who is going to say, "We'll return with the lead-off questions from the Leader of the Opposition right after this," and then cut to a commercial break. There are no corporate logos on the walls of the Legislature behind me. The annual budget bill doesn't carry a reference to a car company or to a soft drink vendor. That's what prompted one satellite broadcast carrier to drop us. So, in a big part of Ontario, nobody can hear me say this. In those communities served by that vendor, Star Choice, nobody can watch their government in action. That's a tragedy, and that's what this motion calls upon the government of Canada to change.

This motion essentially says to the broadcast and cable industry that if you want to offer content to your subscribers and make some money using public bandwidth or public airwaves, one choice your customers must have is to watch their government in action.

It says that if you want to apply for a new licence to carry broadcast content or want to renew an existing one, you will carry the provincial legislative proceedings if they're offered in the province or territory you serve.

It says that you will dedicate a minimum of one channel to these broadcast proceedings and carry them live if they're offered live. If you won't do that, you can't have a licence to carry any content at all, because public airwaves and public bandwidth don't belong to you, if you're a broadcaster; they belong to all of us.

The consensus, and indeed the legitimacy, of what we do in this Ontario chamber of democracy is derived from what the US Declaration of Independence calls, very correctly, "the consent of the governed."

This resolution says that whatever is said or done here by the men and women who come together in this legislative chamber to serve the people who sent them, you can watch them do it. You may not have to; you may not want to; but you can.

This resolution says that we in Ontario seek the informed consent of the governed, not merely their passive awareness that they are in fact governed.

In fact, Speaker—and those of you watching this live or rebroadcast—it can be better-than-average reality TV. There are no multiple takes. There's no producer, director or screenwriter. On this channel, you can see 107 men and women, chosen by communities all across Ontario, speaking about the things they believe in, things they're trying to do in your community or your region, and speaking about the state of your province and the direction they believe it's going, for better or for worse.

1410

Debate can get passionate in here; in fact, it's supposed to be passionate in here. This is Ontario's kitchen table. This is where Ontario's issues get thrashed out. This is where we arrive at a decision, right or wrong, whether you agree with it or not. This is where we, who serve on your behalf, focus our resources in the here and now. This is where and how we Ontarians shape our future for the years and decades to come, and you're watching it live. There are characters to emulate on this channel, there are attributes to copy, there are drawbacks to avoid, and there are certainly personalities from one end of the spectrum to the other.

This channel is most commonly called Ont.Parl. The TV signal is fed via an uplink to the Anik satellite some 35,000 kilometres up in space, in geosynchronous orbit above the earth, which means that relative to a fixed point on the planet, it's pretty much always in the same place. We have a permanent window of opportunity, then, to transmit content up and to receive content down. The satellite relays the signal all over Canada, and the signal is received by cable companies, and it's distributed on cable systems throughout the province of Ontario, and

if you're watching this outside, throughout the province that you live in. The signal is available if you own a satellite receiver.

All legislative proceedings are carried live, and they're rebroadcast the same evening. When the House is not sitting, some committee hearings are broadcast live from a committee room here in the Ontario Legislative Building called the Amethyst Room, on the main floor. On Sundays, a program called Sunday Encore is broadcast. It's a compilation of the previous week's legislative proceedings.

Currently, Ont.Parl is available to almost 300 cable stations across Ontario. It is a part of Bell TV's new IPTV offering here in Ontario. But Ont.Parl has been dropped by Star Choice, which is now Shaw Broadcast Services. In May 2008, Shaw Broadcast Services advised the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that it had run out of capacity on its Ku band. Since the last week of July of this year, Shaw no longer offers its subscribers the Ont.Parl channel. That means that if you're a Shaw subscriber and you're watching this right now, chances are you're probably outside your own home.

Says the president of the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission: "Broadcast coverage of the various provincial Legislatures is not required carriage, and is distributed at the discretion of the various television service providers."

Well, that's what we're here today to change. This resolution urges the government of Canada to get moving and to make mandatory the carrying of the proceedings of the provincial Legislature in each province in which a broadcast provider wishes to serve subscribers. That means that if you live in Ontario, at least one channel is going to be this channel; if you live in Alberta, at least one channel will carry the proceedings of the Alberta Legislative Assembly; and so on. It seeks to maintain the stipulation that if you're offering television content to your subscribers, the provincial proceedings must be part of a basic cable package.

The last thing that we want to do on either the government or the opposition side of this House is to further empower the power brokers in our democracy or to curse our political leaders by putting the proceedings of our provincial Legislature, in Ontario or any other province, out of sight and therefore out of mind. We want people in Ontario to be able to surf their channels, to be able to see a member on his or her feet speaking their mind and to be able to say something like, "There's my MPP, and that's exactly what I would say if I were standing there." Or the viewer could say, "What a strutting clown. I hope they get rid of you at the next election." Or you could say or think whatever it is that you want.

This resolution seeks to maintain your ability to see the best and the worst in the men and women who serve you within the government of Ontario, to see it live, to see it uncensored, to see it unfiltered, and to see it unedited. Informed consent of the governed demands nothing less. I urge passage of this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to commend my colleague the member for Mississauga–Streetsville for bringing this motion forward. I'm pleased to commit my support to this motion.

This motion speaks to the very heart of democratic rights and responsibilities as expressed within our political culture. It also speaks to our civic values, which not only include a freely functioning Legislature, but also access to the proceedings of the Legislature by all members of the public, who are collectively represented by this Legislature.

Our democratic system of government presumes an informed and an engaged electorate. It is therefore essential that people have access to the proceedings of their Legislature and understand the issues of the day as they're debated in this place.

As we all know, the media is in fact an integral part of the parliamentary system today. In this regard, it has a vital role to play in strengthening not only the knowledge about what Parliament does, but also about what Parliament is and its role in our society. In today's world, we rely a great deal on the media to act as an interface between the institutions of democracy and the people they serve; done right, the media brings transparency to the activities of government and ensures that the public institutions function in a responsive and responsible manner.

It is precisely for these important civic purposes that the Ontario Parliamentary Network was established in 1986, to broadcast the parliamentary proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. However, when this network began to be distributed by cable and satellite providers, many individuals outside the GTA stopped having access to the broadcast proceedings of this Legislature, simply because cable companies chose not to include the channel as part of their commercial offerings. In fact, the community of Aurora, my hometown, in my riding of Newmarket–Aurora, does not have access to real-time parliamentary process. It is relegated to the late-night or early-morning rerun time slot.

There are some who would argue that the proceedings are adequately shown on regular TV channels already. In fact, only selective examples of the proceedings are highlighted within the narrow constraints of news reports, and more often than not, these are further constrained by what some have termed the dictatorship of the sound bite. In the process, the public might only garner a partial picture of our political system in general and of our parliamentary proceedings in particular.

The Ontario Parliamentary Network, however, provides a comprehensive overview of the work of this place. Unlike other media channels, the Ontario Parliamentary Network allows viewers to decide for themselves how to interpret the words of their elected representatives, rather than have that message edited by particular media outlets. Parliamentary networks, therefore, exercise an important educational role, in allowing

the public access to information about government and about opposition affairs, whose interface in the Legislature will impact their lives and those of their families. I would like to reiterate my support for this motion brought forward by my colleague for this very reason. I believe it's fundamental to the functioning of this place and to an effective democracy—by doing so, we will ensure that the very foundation of our democratic political culture is protected.

Once again, I want to thank my colleague for bringing this forward. I trust that the CRTC, I trust that the Canadian government, will take to heart what I trust will be the unanimous support of this motion by this Legislature so that we can get on and have this important change implemented.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm rising to support this resolution introduced by the member from Mississauga—Streetsville. I think it's a good resolution. I was cheering on this side of the House. I noticed a lot of your colleagues weren't, and I don't get it, but I kind of like this resolution.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We like it too.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes, but I need to see you cheering for the member.

Applause.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: That's fine. I feel better.

This is a political channel. Every cable provider ought to be providing, in their basic package, this parliamentary channel so the people can see what we're doing. It could be that the people will be turned off by what we do in this place or by some of us, but on the whole I think people will like what we do and who we are and what we represent.

1420

I think people are entitled to witness the debates and to see their members, or indeed any of the members in this place, be they from Durham or Mississauga—Streetsville or wherever. I've got to tell you, there are a whole lot of people who wouldn't know who we are or what we do if they didn't see us debate in this Legislature. It is good from time to time, when you travel outside of your own riding, that people recognize you. Why? It's because of the parliamentary channel, because people are watching, because people want to see you and hear what you have to say. They're entitled, and cable providers should be providing it and they're not. At the moment, you've got to pay. We are way up there on Rogers. You've got to really get up there to see us on 105—not to attack Rogers; I'm just saying you've got to go right up there.

Now, some people will get to it. I suppose you can just click in 105 and you're done. But it's high up. Most people start at channel 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6. At 11 or 12, they just stop. The problem is and the point is, it should be accessible to all. And quite right—the member said it himself, and others—what we say is not interpreted by the media or changed and/or manipulated by the media in any way; it's direct. They see what you have to say, and

if they like it, great; if they don't, they see that too, and they see it immediately.

We are losing support as politicians. We are not loved, and for a variety of reasons. I believe if people see this Legislature in action that people would have a sense of what we do. Would that encourage more and more people to get involved? Would it encourage them to get involved as active citizens? I don't know. But certainly to be informed is better than not to be informed.

Is it possible that some young people are watching this program? I don't think so. I don't think young people are watching this political channel except for those real young die-hard Conservative types, socialist types and some Liberals in the mushy middle. It's true: You'll find some of them, too, watching this political channel. Will it solve our diminishing population which has little interest in the political process? It won't, but it certainly will help. I actually believe—and I haven't talked to the Minister of Education about this, but at some point I may—we've got to solve our disinterest in the political process at the high school level, indeed, the elementary level. There was a time when we were younger where at the elementary panel in grade 6, they were teaching the role of government.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's grade 5 now.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Oh, some of you think grade 5?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I spoke to a class yesterday of grade fives studying provincial government.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes, there was a time. There's a diminishing number of people taking an interest in politics because we do not teach it well and/or adequately. I think we teach it very inadequately. At the high school level, we've got two half courses teaching about politics—two half courses. They're not mandatory. How many students have a sense of what politics is all about, what politicians are all about or indeed what political parties are all about? Most young people have no sense of what political parties are and/or their differences. How can we expect them to vote if they have no clue who we are and what we represent?

It would be nice, I think, if students could learn what New Democrats stand for, what Liberals stand for and what Conservatives stand for, and I say this not in a partisan way, but in a neutral way—and there are other parties. To be fair, we have to talk about the other parties as well, and I have no complaints or disagreement with that. But if students knew, they would be engaged and indeed they would be voting.

It doesn't matter to me what they do once they have this knowledge as long as they get involved. Better that you're involved in a political party that I might disagree with than not to be involved. I really genuinely believe that when students are engaged, they make me accountable. Active citizenry makes politicians accountable and all political parties accountable. Sometimes I wonder whether political parties want to be accountable. If they did, why wouldn't we be teaching young people what we do, how we affect their lives and the lives of their

parents? Why aren't we teaching them what we do? It's an important question because I don't think we've ever had this kind of debate. Why shouldn't it be an active part of our elementary and secondary curriculum as a way of ensuring that young people know, and hopefully, with knowledge, become engaged?

I believe that's the direction we should be moving in. I say this because I'm not quite sure that having a parliamentary channel leads to what I'm talking about, but I did want to link it, because they are linked. It's about knowledge. It's about access to politics and politicians. It's about access to the political process. Whether it's in school or in this place, as they access through that television they both amount to the same thing—access to information. And they're entitled to it.

TVO used to do great things. They don't do the job they used to do at one point. Teachers used to use TVO in a very active way. They were actively involved in the political process. Yes, through *The Agenda* they are offering an incredible political debate and I support that. They used to do a lot more with our educational system and our educators, and they do less of it.

My friend from Streetsville, I support your motion; it's a good one. We need to make sure that we go forward with it. We need to make sure that our Premier moves forward with this resolution and we need to push it, because I believe it's a good resolution.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm delighted to rise to speak in support of the motion by my colleague the member from Mississauga—Streetsville, a motion which would require that—with the co-operation of the federal government—when the CRTC grants a licence for cable or satellite, as a condition of that licence that cable or satellite would be required to carry the provincial parliamentary channel.

When I was first elected in 2003, two things surprised me. The first was the number of people who actually were watching the parliamentary channel. I would often be in the community at an event and somebody would say, "Oh, Liz, I heard you say this in the House or saw you doing that in the House." I was very pleasantly surprised to find that people out there really were paying attention to the legislative channel.

The other thing that surprised me when I was elected in 2003 was to find out that our local Rogers Cable company actually didn't carry all the parliamentary proceedings. I want to emphasize that this is not a negative comment about the Rogers community staff in Guelph. The people that do community programming in Guelph are great. This was a corporate decision somewhere higher up. Those of you who were here will remember that in 2003 and 2004 we spent a lot of time sitting in the evenings. We sat almost every evening until 9:30 and some evenings we sat until 11:30. What Rogers Cable was doing in Guelph was that at 8 o'clock, no matter what was going on in this Legislature, they cut people off mid-stream and showed a movie, with ads. They were using the legislative channel to generate revenue. A

number of people complained about this, and it went on and on. I don't remember the exact date when the situation was rectified, but I do remember that it was about a week after the member who was the leader of the official opposition first took his seat to represent Orangeville, and somehow the service magically came back to cover all the debates of House. That was my first cable story.

My second cable story has to do with how in 2003, like a number of other new members, I had to furnish an apartment here in Toronto. Having a basic sort of Scottish parsimonious streak to me, I went out and bought a small, affordable television for my apartment here in Toronto. I thought, "That's fine. I'm not going to watch it that much." Well, I was really quite surprised, I think about 2007, to find I could no longer get the legislative channel, so I went looking for the legislative channel. Where the legislative channel gone? It turned out it had moved up into the stratosphere, into the digital channels. If I wanted to be able to watch the legislative channel anymore, first of all I was going to have to upgrade my cable service and pay for digital cable service. Secondly, because I'd got this small, affordable TV, I was going to have to go out and get a digital converter.

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I suspect that I was not unlike a lot of other people—I'm thinking of seniors—who have small, affordable televisions. They just couldn't afford to get that legislative service anymore and, quite frankly, I think that's appalling. What people in Toronto share with people in rural Ontario is that people in rural Ontario who rely on satellite service often find out that the satellite service also does not carry the Ontario legislative channel, so I am totally supportive of the member's motion.

Citizens of Ontario have a right to see what their legislators are doing. They have sent us here to act on their behalf. They have a right to be able to monitor what we are doing. They cannot do that in selected 10-second sound bites; they have a right to have access to what goes on in this place. I fully support the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to stand today in support of the resolution from the member from Mississauga—Streetsville. This resolution basically would ask the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, where a licence is issued to either a cable service or a satellite provider, that they're required to carry, in a basic package of television services—and I think that's important, in a basic package—the proceedings of the province or territory. I believe that's important.

I believe this resolution came out of the fact that Mr. Delaney sits on the Legislative Assembly committee and broadcast services report to the Legislative Assembly committee, and it had come to that committee that some services were no longer carrying the Queen's Park proceedings on their services. I would say that we spend a lot of money televising the services that go on here, so obviously, we must think it's of value. If we're going to

spend the millions of dollars that we spend to have broadcast services, then I think it's important that it be available for any resident of the province, and also, for the individual members, that the coverage be blanket coverage, not coverage that is spotty. I would say, from the perspective of the member, it is actually an advantage to have full coverage across your riding so that all the people within your constituency—that's assuming you're doing a good job in the Legislature—are able to see what you are up to here at Queen's Park. We do spend a lot of money on it, so I believe that we should have even coverage across the province and that every member should be able to watch the proceedings here.

That's particularly true in rural Ontario. In my case, I live half an hour from the nearest town and so the service we have for television is—in our case it's Bell ExpressVu, and they don't cover Queen's Park. As far as I know, Star Choice has dropped Queen's Park as well. That means that big pockets of rural Ontario, most of rural Ontario that relies on satellite service, do not have access to Queen's Park.

As the member from Guelph mentioned, I'm always amazed at how many people do follow the proceedings here, other than Jim Wilson's mother, Mr. Speaker of today. I was up at the McKellar Fall Fair in September. A few days before that fair, I'd been at the estimates committee for the day, for five hours of questioning of the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. I was quite surprised—I didn't realize McKellar had cable service—when John Moffat, the president of the agricultural society, said, "I really liked seeing the way you and the NDP member, Gilles Bisson, were going after the minister about those ONTC cuts." Obviously, it is important that he's aware of that issue and concerned about it and the effects it has on our area, and he was able to learn about it by watching the service here at Queen's Park.

In the little time I have left, I would just say that I believe that anyone in the province should be able to watch the proceedings here at Queen's Park. We have declining participation in elections. I think it's important that people see what's going on here. If you believe that what we do here is important, then you should support this resolution.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to echo some of the comments that were made by the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka.

There are many people in Ontario who are not living in areas where cable television exists. So, you have the first problem, where some cable companies don't carry the parliamentary channel unless you get the extended package, and who can afford that? Some of us don't watch a lot of television. We're news junkies and tend to watch the news and the House of Commons and the Legislature, so you're frozen out. But for many people in my constituency, there are no cable services. So people who are living in remote areas are having to rely either

on Star Choice or on ExpressVu, and as I understand it, ExpressVu doesn't provide it, but Star Choice does.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, that's right. I got it right.

I've had calls to my constituency for all the reasons that we were told about here today. It's unfair that they have to watch the BC legislative channel and they can't watch the Ontario legislative channel. God knows, my constituents certainly have too much of me, so maybe that's not a bad thing.

Anyway, I just say to you that we'll support this motion, and we strongly support the mandating of making sure that the signal is carried on basic cable for television, as well as making sure it's on our satellite networks.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm honoured and privileged to stand up in my place to support the motion brought by the member from Mississauga-Streetsville. I think it's a very important motion and a very important issue.

I've been listening to all the members from both sides of the House speak about the importance of this issue, especially when we talk about the democratic process and how we allow the people outside this chamber to watch us and see how their members are behaving, how they're acting, and if they are advocating on behalf of them or not. I think it's very important.

Many members spoke about different issues, especially about how many cable companies don't carry this channel. I know that the media department in this place has paid a lot of money and has good staff. They do a good job, but their work is not being shown outside this place because many outlets are not carrying their channel.

Also, if you want to see this channel, you have to pay extra money; you have to be a certain cable owner to be able to watch it. As my colleague from Guelph mentioned a few minutes ago when she was speaking in support of this bill, ExpressVu does not carry this channel. Also, some modest-income families don't have digital TVs that are able to carry this channel, especially after they moved it. A couple of years ago they moved it from 76 to 105, and you have to have a special TV in order to get that channel.

Also, many members, especially the member from Trinity-Spadina, were talking about how it's important for democracy, and to send a message to the people outside this place and create interest among young people in the democratic process, and also change the image of the politicians out there. As you know, we have a bad image. It's been said that we do nothing when we come to Toronto, so it's very important to show them what we do on a daily basis, how the opposition and the government defend their positions, how the opposition holds the government responsible—all the parts of the democratic process.

The only way to spread democracy and inform the people outside this chamber is by supporting the motion

of the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, because I think it would force the cable companies or satellite services to carry that channel.

Also, many members brought up a very important issue: This channel should be carried for free with basic TV, because many people have no extra dollars to pay in order to receive that channel.

In order to create democracy, in order to spread political ideas and in order that people in the province of Ontario can see what their members are doing on their behalf, I think it's very important to keep them informed through the channel. I want to congratulate the member from Mississauga–Streetsville for this initiative. I think he brought a very important issue to this House, and I hope all the members will support it.

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I believe, from what I heard this afternoon, both sides of the House support it. Hopefully, the federal government will listen to us and force the CRTC to put as part of the package a condition that all the satellite and TV channels and cable carry this channel.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to speak on the motion brought forward by my colleague the member from Mississauga–Streetsville and applaud him for the recognition of the importance of the broadcasting of our provincial legislative proceedings.

This is near and dear to me, as some members may know. I mentioned often, when my mother was able to watch the legislative channel, that she watched. She was a big fan of my colleague the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, John Yakabuski. But when the Legislature resumed, we turned the satellite dish on—because we're in rural Ontario, we don't have the luxury of cable; we have satellite dish providers. We've changed a couple. When we were first with Bell, they didn't carry it. We went to Star Choice so she could watch the legislative channel. So when she turned it on in September to find out it wasn't on, I certainly got a call, and I know Star Choice got a call to say, "What has happened?" There isn't even any opportunity to get a different package. It just isn't available.

We have, in rural Ontario, limited ability to get our message out as provincial legislators. I say that the provincial level of government touches people the most, and we're doing a disservice to the people of Ontario by not allowing them access—at least a choice to access. We all know it can be a little dry and boring in here some days, but at least they had the choice to flip through to the channel. If it wasn't to hear their member, it was at least to see what's going on, what we're discussing.

Bob Runciman, the member from Leeds–Grenville, has certainly been a great advocate to bring attention to the fact that media coverage is reduced of late. The number of reporters that we used to have in the gallery from regional newspapers and television stations has gone down over the last few years. TVO no longer has a dedicated provincial political show since the cancellation

of Fourth Reading, and they no longer have staff members covering the Legislature at Queen's Park coming directly over.

I understand the important role of the CRTC in terms of broadcasting availability in this country and where its responsibilities lie. But we do have a provincial tool at our disposal, that being TVO, which is within the purview of the government of Ontario. You know, the CEO of TVOntario was just in for some committee hearings. Its mandate: "TVO plays a valuable role as a smart alternative to commercial broadcasters; we are helping people of all ages become more engaged in our communities, our province and our world." That's what the CEO said when she came into committee. I would say by not covering the Ontario Legislature and the proceedings that go on there, we're denying our citizens the opportunity to be engaged in the process of running this great province that we live in.

So when we're asking the CRTC to become involved, I fully agree with that. We do have a tool in our toolbox, being TVO. You can get a question period rerun at 3 a.m., and I know some of us often don't sleep and we have a lot of things on our minds as MPPs, but it's a little bit of a stretch to say that people are watching question period at 3 in the morning on TVO.

Other provinces, if you go to Star Choice now, and I'm going to use that: They still have the Alberta legislative channel on there—I know it is an Alberta-based company—and they still have the BC legislative proceedings on there. And we don't have the Ontario legislative channel any longer there.

I could say that there is a positive to it: I don't get as much fashion advice as I used to, because fewer and fewer people are watching from the riding. But this is critical to keep people involved in provincial politics, and I'll support this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: There's a saying, "Everything has been said, but not everyone has said it," so I will take my opportunity to extend my support for this motion. I think the member from Mississauga–Streetsville was entirely correct in bringing it forward.

We in Ontario, we in a democratic society, have a responsibility to ensure that everyone has access to information at the same time. Before television, before cable, before the Internet, people relied on the printed word, the spoken word, but the opportunity is there now for everyone in this society to access, for good and for ill, our words as they are spoken.

For the people out there watching this, I assume there are some who are probably working in law firms right now and monitoring what's going on in the Legislature. To those of you who are doing this, you have my condolences because I know there are days that it's rough. I have had constituents say to me, "I watch this channel to deal with insomnia." I have to confess that all of us, myself included, sometimes contribute to fighting insomnia in this province.

Setting that aside, in real terms, if you're going to have a democratic society, if you're going to have people with access to information so they can make decisions and hold politicians accountable, if you're going to make sure that throughout this province people have the full opportunity to weigh what we say and judge whether or not what we're saying is in their interest or not in their interest, then this motion should go forward.

The federal government should call on the CRTC to require cable companies, which are on the whole doing very well, to provide as a public service access to the legislative channel on basic service so that everyone who wants it—not just cable; satellite as well—can have that access.

I would say that, for us, who are proponents of democracy in all parties, it is incumbent on us to have this go forward, to make sure that our constituents and the citizens of this province are actually able to exercise their democratic power.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I'm very pleased to join in the debate. I first want to congratulate our colleague from Mississauga–Streetsville, who has brought forward an important issue for discussion on the floor of this Legislature. It seems critical that we're discussing from the floor of this Legislature the availability of access to this very debate around the province.

As all of us put our names on a ballot and seek to have the privilege to represent our community here in the Legislature, whether we agree or disagree on topics, we all do it in order to advocate for our community. It seems absolutely critical that that community that had the decision-making power of whether to send us here or not has the opportunity to see what we're talking about here, and to touchstone, at their leisure and when they choose to, whether or not we're continuing to reflect the important values that they thought we were bringing forward to the floor of this Legislature.

It's our privilege here in this House to talk about issues of importance to our communities, to engage in debate from all sides of the House that reflect the struggles, the challenges, the joys and the privileges we have as being citizens of this province. That is at the heart, as others have said, of what this debate is about today. It's about ensuring that we have an educated, informed public who knows what we're talking about, who has the opportunity to gain that insight.

I had a recent discussion with some of my constituents with respect to the fact that they did not feel they had very many opportunities to hear our political leaders in Canada reflect what their vision was for the country, for the province, for their community. It came as a result of so many of our constituents around the province, I'm sure, watching the speeches coming out of the United States with respect to the presidential debates. In those presidential speeches, run at prime time at all of those conventions, they have an opportunity or we all have an opportunity to hear first-hand what kind of country, what

kind of democracy, what kinds of values those political leaders have.

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In this day and age, where you have two, three, four or five seconds in a sound bite, in a media clip; or one line in a newspaper article; or an opportunity to talk about the issues that are important to you and your constituents in 30 seconds, this legislative channel is one of the few opportunities where Ontarians have the ability to listen unfiltered, to hear what drives us, why we are here, what kinds of people represent them in the Legislature, what our values are and what makes us want to put our names on a ballot and come and talk about those issues.

I can tell you that in those instances where all of us in this House, no matter how different our perspectives might be, have an opportunity to share a little bit about what is important to us and what has driven us to come here—those are important times for our constituents and for Ontarians, to hear the values of the people who have the privilege to represent them here at Queen's Park.

I think it's important across the province that Ontarians have the ability to hear, unfiltered, what we have to say. They might not like it; they might like it. But they will have better insight as to what is driving decisions here at Queen's Park than they will when they only have a few seconds of a sound bite.

It's an important debate, and I support my colleague's motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. The member for Mississauga–Streetsville, Mr. Delaney, has up to two minutes to reply.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you very much, Speaker. I thank all of those who participated in this debate today.

I believe that people should not be fearful of their government, but by the same token I do believe that, as government, we should always be a little apprehensive about how we are thought of by those in whose name we govern.

I want to thank my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora, who is an orator whose positions I may or may not always agree with, but whose consummate skill I have learned to respect over the last five years.

I want to thank my colleague from Trinity–Spadina, and I can assure him that everyone who watches this channel knows who he is. He is indeed the living embodiment of the passion I spoke of in my remarks.

I want to thank my colleague from Guelph, who echoes what we all know experientially about the sheer number of people who pay attention to us from day to day.

I would like to thank and acknowledge my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka, who comes from a very proud political family in rural Ontario. I happen to know that the member's constituents watch him, because I've had the experience of having them tell me so when I've met them. Many people, in fact, follow the proceedings here very closely, and they know many of us, even those who are not their members.

To my colleague from Timmins–James Bay, whose riding is larger than many countries, the success of this

motion is vital for rural Ontario to feel connected to its democracy; to my colleague from London–Fanshawe, who points out accurately that we must not let providers put up an economic barrier to seeing our democracy in action; to my colleague from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, who points out that seniors vote and seniors care, seniors want to know who is here and who is doing what and seniors are Ontario’s fastest-growing demographic; and to the member for Toronto–Danforth, who said that everything has been said. But, to paraphrase him, has everyone been able to hear it?

Thank you very much. Indeed, if we have a debate on the floor of this Legislature and no one sees or hears it, does the result really matter?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Before I call orders of the day, for those at home who can watch us, and those in the gallery, the vote on that ballot item will take place in approximately 50 minutes, if all goes well.

SKILLS TRAINING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I have had an opportunity to review Bill 107, standing in the name of Mr. Marchese, in order to determine whether or not it is a money bill.

In this regard, standing order 57 states as follows: “Any bill, resolution, motion or address, the passage of which would impose a tax or specifically direct the allocation of public funds, shall not be passed by the House unless recommended by a message from the Lieutenant Governor, and shall be proposed only by a minister of the crown.”

Since the bill would bind the crown to spend at least 1% of its payroll on training or some combination of training and payment into the fund that would be established by the bill, I am of the opinion that the bill would specifically direct the allocation of public funds. I find therefore that the bill is out of order because it is a money bill, contrary to standing order 57, and that it should be removed from the orders and notices paper.

This prevents the member for Trinity–Spadina from moving Bill 107 as his ballot item this afternoon. However, notice having been waived on the member for Trinity–Spadina’s ballot item, I understand that he will instead move a resolution. The member has made copies of the resolution available at the Clerk’s office for all members to access. I call upon the member for Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government should establish a workforce skills development and training fund to promote and support workforce skills development and related measures and initiatives; and that the fund be administered by a committee composed of representatives of labour unions, employers and government; and that consideration be given to requiring that every employer with a payroll of \$1 million or greater contribute at least 1% of the payroll amount to workforce training, with any shortfall of that amount being directed to the fund.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Marchese moves a private members’ resolution, ballot item number 42. Mr. Marchese, pursuant to standing order 97, you have up to 12 minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: First of all, I want to thank the Clerk, Madam Deller, for her support and her skill in helping to sort this matter out. The bill that I would have spoken to was never intended to involve the government. It was such that we felt it would not be in contravention of any rules, and we found out just before 12 p.m. that it would be on the basis that somehow this would involve the government. As I say, it was intended to only affect corporations who have a payroll of \$1 million or more, and would therefore be obliged to spend 1% of their payroll for the training of their workforce. That’s what this motion does. That’s what the bill would have done. As I say, the government would not have been affected one way or the other, but this motion obviously serves to allow me to say what I would have otherwise said.

I think this motion comes at a critical time because, I have to tell you, that we need to be investing a lot more in the training of our workers. We are not, in my view, doing an adequate job in Canada. In the absence of a Canadian strategy on how we train our workers, we’re obliged, as a provincial government, to fill in the gaps. The problem with filling in the gaps is that if Ontario does one thing, and another province doesn’t, then it leads to problems from one province to the other. It’s sad that we sometimes have to do this as provinces where governments should lead in an area that is critical to our economy. Worker training has become a major issue in our society because it involves worker employability, because it speaks to the competitiveness between the various corporations in our own province and country and outside. It speaks to our country’s economic performance, and it speaks to the problems of globalization that we’ve been experiencing in the last 15 years or more.

We need to continually adapt the workforce to the technological and organizational change, and the transformation of our labour market. The problem is that there’s a huge gap between the discourse around the need to train our workers, and the reality—a huge gap in Canada, in this province, and indeed in all provinces. The question is, how do we help to deal with the problem of worker training? Now, every province will say, “We’re doing this and that, and we’re all doing great things,” and I’m convinced the government will stand up and talk about all the great stuff that they’re doing. I’m convinced of it. You have a speech ready, I’m assuming?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Yes, after you’re finished.

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Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes. There’s a speech ready; I’m convinced of it.

The point is, this is yet another tool that I offer—that we, as New Democrats, offer—for training of the workforce in this province and how we push the federal government to have a national strategy. We need to have a strong role of the state in this matter. You can have all

the voluntary actions of the corporate sector, wherever they may be, but in my view it's inadequate. It doesn't work as well as having institutional governmental involvement in this matter.

What we have had through the voluntary mechanisms of the market is a disparate number of programs all over that create nothing but problems in the end. Yes, there are good programs here and elsewhere, but we need a broader strategy, and I believe my bill speaks to that.

What we are missing, in my view, is a training culture. We do not have a training culture in this province, not to speak of this country. What we do not have is a strong partnership approach between government, employers and unions. We do not have that. There are countries that have a better approach to this. Germany has an excellent approach, Ireland is working on this and France has done this.

Quebec, unique among provinces in this country, does what I bring forward to this Legislature. On the suggestion of the de Grandpré Advisory Council on Adjustment, which made a similar recommendation to what I'm proposing, Quebec instituted that in 1995, on his suggestion that Canada do this. Quebec was the only province that took up that suggestion. The federal government didn't want to do it; no other province took it up. Only Quebec did it. Quebec leads in so many areas.

We are so unwilling to go to Europe to look for better solutions—so unwilling—as if it's impossible for us to access information as to what other countries do. The only people Ontarians and Canadians seem to listen to are the States. Why, I'm not quite sure. Yes, they are our neighbours. But if there are other countries that deliver better programs, why are we so unwilling to look at better practices in other countries? France does this. Quebec draws on France's experience on this. The Advisory Council on Adjustment, headed by M. de Grandpré, obviously took something from the French experience.

What do the French do? They oblige every employer who has 10 employees to devote 1.5% of their payroll to training—not just 1%, but 1.5%. It obliges the corporate sector to provide training when they have 10 employees in their charge. This is good. Why can't we just learn from other people's experience?

I'm looking forward to the already prepared speeches by the Liberal members, just to see what they have to say. If France can do it, why can't we? Why can't Liberals, who often say, "We need government intervention," as M. Dion does at the national level—why can't he learn from the experience of others, and why does he say, "We need government intervention," and at the same time, "Oh, no. That's socialism"? He declares himself to be interventionist and then says, "Oh, but not socialism," as if to suggest government intervention is different when Liberals propose it, but when others propose it, it's socialism. So Liberal intervention is Liberal, but New Democratic interventions are socialism. Don't you find that comical? They crack me up so many times. I roar with laughter when some of the ministers

speak about this and that and M. Dion's comments on this and that. I roar with laughter. But that's the way it is. It's about having a good time, I suppose.

We are presenting a motion, which otherwise would have been a bill, that does not involve the government but rather obliges government to oblige the corporate sector, whose payroll is one million bucks, to invest 1% of their money in training. What could be wrong with that?

Why is it a good thing? It's a good thing because it gives us stability. It gives us permanence. It gives us predictability. It says that all corporations will invest and not some because they believe in it, versus others who don't.

It prevents poaching, my Liberal friends. What does "poaching" mean? It means that I as a corporation don't have to worry about spending money to train because if another corporation is doing it, I could just steal their workers and do it for free. Do you understand what I'm saying? I wonder whether the Liberal notes say that. So I'm looking forward to the Liberal speakers who are going to speak to this motion. It speaks to the problem of poaching.

This says, "We want to create a culture of training." It says, "We need to build partnerships." It says to the corporations, "You have a responsibility to pay into a training fund. You have that responsibility to pay your 1%." If you can't meet that obligation, you have to put an equivalent amount of money into a separate fund that is administered by a committee composed of representatives of labour unions, employees and government. That committee could use the money in the fund to promote and support workforce skills development and related measures and initiatives. This is good intervention by government. We cannot leave it to the voluntary sector.

I say to you, I borrowed this from Quebecers. We don't even have to travel, like the new minister, Sandra Pupatello, who's going to travel all over the world. I am a supporter of people travelling to other countries to learn; I am. Unlike some of my colleagues, I'm one who supports people travelling to learn. But I'm telling you, the minister is going off at a time when the economy is crumbling across the world. She ain't going to get any jobs for anyone. They're all looking behind themselves saying, "Are we all falling down?" This is the wrong time. But God bless; she's going to go and learn a couple of things here and there. Hopefully she'll learn and bring some of that back.

This is a good motion, and I am hoping that the Liberals haven't a prescribed speech. I'm hoping they're going to throw away their speeches. I'm hoping you're going to throw away your speech because you need to be spontaneous. You need to feel it viscerally, here. Unless you feel it more or less here, that means you have been trained to give a message that isn't yours, but rather one written by those young people there behind the Speaker, the Liberal young people. I see so many Liberal young people; it's unbelievable. They write those speeches. Don't read them.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: From the heart.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Speak from either the heart or a little bit lower; just a little bit lower.

I'm looking forward to hearing what the Liberal and indeed my Tory colleagues have to say.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I just remind members that props aren't allowed, whether you bring them with you or they're part of you.

Further debate?

Mr. Reza Moridi: I rise in this House to speak about Bill 107 from my mind rather than from my heart. This is an act to promote workforce training proposed by the honourable member from Trinity-Spadina.

As a member of this House and also as the former educator, trainer and business executive, by the way, I value the level of skill, training and education of a worker in general terms. It is the worker who produces the wealth; the machinery and equipment are just tools in the hands of our workers. The highly skilled workers are the ones who contribute to our economy. That's why our government pays lots of attention to education, training and bringing the skills of our workforce up to the current level.

The proposed bill by the honourable member from Trinity-Spadina basically proposes that every company or business with a payroll of above \$1 million allocate 1% of its payroll to training. On the surface, this looks fine. It looks fine for the workers; it looks fine for the public. But I'll just give you an example of its impact. A company with a \$1-million payroll is going to pay \$10,000 per year for training of its workers. It's going to cost a company with a \$10-million payroll \$100,000 per year. In total, this bill, if passed, is going to cost our businesses \$2 billion per year.

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This bill is nothing but an extra tax on our businesses. Now, when our economy is facing rather serious challenges from sources outside of this province, from sources not in our control, is not the time to impose extra taxes on our businesses. It's time to help our businesses, it's time to assist our economy, and that is the way we have gone with our five-point plan.

One of those items in that five-point plan is reducing taxes for our businesses: \$3 billion a year in taxes is going to be cut for certain businesses.

Another point in that five-point plan is training. The skills-to-jobs action plan, which is a three-year plan, is going to invest \$1.5 billion in training, the very point that the honourable member proposes in his bill. This \$1.5 billion is allocated from the government's money, not from the businesses' money, for training our workforce. And out of this fund, \$355 million is allocated to Second Career.

Yesterday, I was in Kitchener, attending the opening of an action centre there. I saw first-hand how recently laid-off workers come to this centre and work on their resumé's; they get instruction, they get help, mentoring, from the government employees to help them to find employment.

Another portion of that \$1.5-billion fund, in the amount of \$560 million, will be invested to support new skills.

There is \$75 million which is going to be invested in apprenticeship programs. Since we came to office in 2003 we have increased the number of apprenticeships by 25%, and we are going to increase it by another 25%; so that will be 50%. This is the way to help people to get education, to get training, to increase their skills, to become knowledgeable in the work they have been doing; not charging the businesses to pay for that at this particular time.

We are investing \$25 million for employee-based training in manufacturing, through, for example, the Yves Landry Foundation.

We are also investing \$1 billion through the Ontario employment program. Every year, close to one million employees, 900,000 people, use these services. This is a huge program.

We're also investing \$25 million in union-based training centres. Through this fund, for example, the Dofasco Learning and Development Centre in Hamilton received \$150,000. More than \$69,000 went to the Ironworkers Local 736 training centre. So we are helping union workers to train their fellow workers through that initiative.

And there are other initiatives, as I just mentioned. These are all going to help our workforce to get and receive better education, better training, to be able to contribute more and more to our economy, particularly at this very challenging time. They are our assets: our workers, our employees.

I cannot support this bill; I must emphasize that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this resolution: training for workers. I do not think you will find anybody in this Legislature who disagrees with the need for training workers and training them in skilful ways; it's a really important thing to do. Training is an integral part of remaining competitive in a global marketplace, and it is very important that we do that.

What I do take issue with, and what I'm certain most of my colleagues will agree with, is that Ontario businesses do not need any more regulations that are accompanied by higher costs. They are swimming in regulations and in many cases closing up shop because of overregulation. Eighty per cent of small businesses were surveyed by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. What they listed as the first key concern that they felt was an impediment to growth was overregulation. It is the small business community in Ontario that will once again bear the biggest brunt from yet another regulation. Businesses that employ between zero and four employees pay—I find this outrageous—an average of \$3,700 per employee in taxes and regulatory responsibilities. I ask you, how much more can they take?

It is the Progressive Conservative Party in Ontario that has a proven track record in restoring economic prosperity to our communities. Even under a Bob Rae government, Ontario was not last on the list of its partners in Confederation in job creation and economic growth. The PC government turned the economy around in Ontario in 1995, and we are more than happy to help the McGuinty government save themselves and our communities from this government's wrong-headed approach to the economy.

It was a PC government that created the Red Tape Commission. The Red Tape Commission successfully repealed 33 laws and eliminated over 1,300 redundant or oppressive regulations. It is not a coincidence that our economy thrived under that initiative, creating thousands of jobs a week. No, these weren't only public sector jobs, the type Mr. McGuinty prefers to create. The jobs created were good-paying jobs that you could raise families on, make investments with, and let you look forward to a secure financial future.

Premier McGuinty has taken only five short years to pull the promise of that financial future right out from under us. Not only has this Premier only repealed 81 redundant regulations, but he has chosen to add 437 new regulations in a short five years. Businesses are going to have to hire someone full-time just to wade through the regulations required of them before they can focus on the important task of running their businesses.

The member from Trinity-Spadina, while well-meaning, would be aiding the Premier in this ill-conceived job creation plan. Government needs to create a positive economic environment. We need to reduce the costs, the taxes and the regulatory burden on our business community so that they can remain competitive. Companies are packing up. Where's the destination? It's anywhere outside Ontario, where they can make a living and focus on their businesses.

A wise man once told this Legislature that our companies have a new motto: Go west. That is exactly where they're going in search of greener pastures. In Ontario, we can restore our economic prosperity; we can have hope and a solid financial future once again. The Ontario PC caucus is more than willing to work with all members of the House to address these issues. We have the experience of turning the economy around, and we don't want to wait until 2011 to do it.

I can hear that collective groan from the small business community now at the thought of a mandated 1% additional cost for training. They can't afford it, they don't want it, and if we keep piling these on them, they will not be here long enough to go through it. I think it's an excellent opportunity to remind the taxpayers of Ontario about the single largest and also, at the time, well-meaning tax increase they are currently paying for, courtesy of the McGuinty government. It's that so-called health premium. This ill-conceived tax is driving business out of Ontario. If we, as legislators, were serious about helping our economy and keeping our businesses here investing in Ontario, we would be repealing this tax

immediately. Businesses cannot afford it, citizens can't afford it and certainly, most of all, our senior citizens can't afford it. Keeping this premium or tax is pure and simple greed on the part of Premier McGuinty and this government.

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Before he wastes any more of our hard-earned tax dollars on a fairness-to-Ontario election-style campaign, it would behoove him to try a little fairness of his own right here at home in Ontario. There are actions that can be taken right here, right now by the McGuinty government to help Ontarians, and adding new regulations and costs isn't one of them.

The PC caucus has a proven track record of getting the economy back on track. We did it after Bob Rae, and we will do it after Dalton McGuinty and his destructive reign. We would prefer to fix it now rather than later. Let's eliminate costs and regulatory burdens on our businesses and our citizens, not add new ones. Let's give them some space to do what they do best—that's create jobs. Let's stop shoving a form at them every time they turn around.

Ontario can be great again. I believe that, I know my caucus believes that, and now we need all members of this House to believe that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's like the Conservatives—and the Liberals to an extent—it's like their train has gone outside the station and they're still trying to go back to what was at the station. We're in the middle of this economic meltdown and it just astounds me that the right wing doesn't get it, that deregulation has led to the mess that we're in. We still have right-wing parties that are out there saying, "We need to deregulate and get out of business." The reality is that government has a role to play in all of this and that we, as governments at either the provincial or federal level, need to take our responsibilities to make sure that the things that need to be done in our society are done. One that's quite important is the issue of training.

I've had the opportunity to sit down, as all of us here in this Legislature have, with the building trade hiring halls, the trade unions that represent people who are in the trade sector and employers, and here's what the problem is. As I sit down with the employers in the constituency that I represent and other places as I travel around for this leadership contest, people are saying, "Listen, we want to do the training," and in some cases they are. But they're finding it increasingly difficult to do so because of where they find themselves in this economy.

The first problem is, there are some difficulties as far as what's coming in on the order book, and they're having some difficulties doing the training. This 1% is not that onerous. It would make sure that at least those who are not doing some training are getting into the training business and making sure that that's done within their employ.

But the big problem is that, as I sat down with industry in different parts of the province, they have tradespeople who are currently working for them and they don't have the tradespeople in the numbers they need. Part of the problem is that they've got apprentices who are registered, yes, but they can't afford to send them off to trade school—not because they can't pay, because they don't. Those apprentices when they go off to trade school are paid off unemployment insurance and have to take basically a leave of absence from work for the eight or 10 weeks they go on their apprenticeship training, and then the apprentice has to pay the registration fee in order to get into the community college to take the program.

So here's the problem: The apprentice himself or herself is already cash-strapped. They're working, they've got a regular job, they've got a mortgage, they've got a car payment, and they've probably got some credit card debt and loans they've got to pay, and they're basically struggling to make ends meet. All of a sudden, they're faced with having to go to trade school for 10 weeks, which is two months' worth of wages, and they lose basically 40% of their wage because they're in the apprenticeship program.

Now, some employers in the trade union environment make sure that there's a top-up for that apprentice not to lose any wages, but the majority of them are not unionized. What you've got are apprentices who can't afford to go to school, although they want to go, because of their financial situation. They can't afford to take the 40% hit, so here's the next part: The apprentice goes to the employer and says, "Listen, can you help me out and give me a top-up?" I've sat down with businesses that said, "We'd love to give them a top-up because we need these people trained to do the work that we need to do," but they're having some difficulty financially. So the government has not responded in any kind of real way to deal with the top-up issue that allows the apprentice to go to school.

The second part—when the Tories moved to charge tuition fees to apprentices, I think that was also a step in the right direction because yet again, the apprentices can't afford in some cases to pay that tuition fee. What's really galling is, the Liberals stand in this House and Dalton McGuinty says, "We're doing all this wonderful stuff for apprentices," but at the end of the day, have they taken away that registration fee? That's the least they could have done, and that has not been taken away.

Here's the last part of the problem: The employers themselves are so strapped when it comes to qualified journeypeople that if they have an apprentice in their employ who has at least done their basic and possibly their intermediate training in the electrical field, machining or whatever it might be, they're finding it really hard to schedule these people to get out of the plant. One of the complaints I'm getting is the apprentices are coming to me and saying, "I have decided that I need to do this. I have held it off for a year. I have been cooperative with my employer but I can't get the time off because my employer is saying, 'If you go, I have nobody to maintain

my equipment.'" They are really hard-pressed to find tradespeople because most of us tradespeople are at the point where we are basically into retirement.

I apprenticed as an electrician back in the 1970s and 1980s. I was probably one of the last of the large hiring of apprentices. All of the people that I went to trade school—I was a young guy back then. I didn't have any grey hair and my beard was black and I weighed a lot less than I do now. But the point is, most of the people I went to trade school with were older than me. They're now going into the process of winding down their careers and moving into retirement. So employers are saying, "We recognize there's a crisis when it comes to apprentices and tradespeople in our employ. We recognize it's a problem, but government is doing hardly nothing in order to respond to the need of our apprenticeship training in this province," because the real issue is, they can't afford to do the top-up. They can afford the 1% payroll. I've had companies that I've dealt with that thought this particular bill was a darn good idea because it at least levels the playing field. Some employers pay and a lot of employers don't. What happens is that employer A, who's paying for training because they are trying to do the right thing, is subsidizing the apprentice who eventually gets qualified and moves somewhere else, to the employer who didn't pay anything for training.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Poaching.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's a poaching issue.

One of the things that I'm told by employers is that at least that tries to address that issue somewhat. I know there's support within the business sector and within the industrial sector for this motion. I would ask for the government to support that particular amendment because I think it's a step in the right direction.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm honoured and I'm privileged to stand up and speak and comment on the speech by the member for Trinity-Spadina when he was talking about his motion to charge businesses 1% in order to retrain workers.

I don't see anyone across the province of Ontario who does not agree that workers have to be trained, have to be brought to a level in order to produce in a good way and a safe way. It is a very important issue, but I think—and many of my colleagues agree with me in terms of the responsibility, the training. Dalton McGuinty's government took full responsibility of retraining people in the province of Ontario. We invested almost \$1.5 billion in order to retrain people and send them in different directions in order to maintain jobs in the province of Ontario.

Many businesses come to this province for many different reasons. One of those reasons is because we have trained people. We have been working with our colleges and training centres across the province of Ontario to train people, especially—

Mr. Mike Colle: What's that college in London? Fanshawe College?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Yes, London-Fanshawe, in conjunction with LIUNA Local 1059, has been working for

many years to create a good workforce in order to supply the companies and factories that want to open in the province of Ontario, especially in our area, London, and the region. It is very important when the government steps in and takes full responsibility to train people and make sure whatever company wants to open, they have the right and trained people to do the job for them.

I was an employer at one time of my life. My interest was to give my workers, or the people working for me, some kind of time to train, and I trained them properly at my own expense, because I believe strongly that if I train them very well, they can produce better, they can make less mistakes, and I think they can serve my customers very well. I took that responsibility and I believe the many different employers across the province of Ontario believe in the same concept. They train their own workers, their own employees, in order to produce for them better, produce extra money and also to protect their business.

I think the motion brought by the member for Trinity-Spadina does not have any valid point. It is not important because, as a government, we take full responsibility, and also the workers and the companies and the factories and the employers in the province of Ontario believe in this issue; it's very important to train their people in order to make sure their jobs are protected, their productivity is in place and they are able to make money and survive. That is why I am not supporting this motion.

1530

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm very pleased to respond to the member from Trinity-Spadina. I know his record speaks for itself. He is always very strongly in favour of education. I can say he is the critic for the NDP, and so he comes at this resolution with some passion and some commitment.

My own background was in personnel for a few years, some of it in training. I realize that companies—not just General Motors, my own experience—spend a considerable amount on training. You look at the retraining and re-skilling of the workforce today, and even in the skilled trades area, I can tell you they have moved from purely electrical installations to robotic installations and programmable devices so that when you look at a digital economy versus the old kind of tooling etc.—tool and die makers, all the skilled trades—it all involves ongoing training.

The best way to describe this is, we're in a knowledge-based economy, and it's incumbent on any employer who wants to stay competitive and efficient to have an integral part of their program relate to ongoing training. Some of it could be as simple of McDonalds making sure that quality and customer service is part of their orientation in training. It's important. So employers, I believe, do it.

Some of that means that while they're having mentoring or other activities going on in companies, that is an expense to the employer. Now, even to the extent that the

Liberals' speaker to this, the member from Mississauga-Brampton South, said that this resolution of Mr. Marchese's would actually add about \$2 billion as a drag or a tax, if you will, on employers—so, for that reason, it's like father knows best.

A smart employer that wants to sustain and exist in today's economy has to invest in education; there's no question about it. How much becomes the issue, because our current economics is about transformation in the economy. It was all part of the discussion yesterday. In fact, I believe Mr. Runciman, our House leader, said it very clearly, and we've had comments from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, and from the competitiveness group, who advise the Premier that they've got to invest more in education.

In the very limited time I'm going to have, there's Roger Martin, dean of the Rotman School of Management, whose advice was given to the Premier, and here is what he says: "In Ontario, we still have one of the highest marginal tax burdens on business investment in the world." So we don't need this government-made solution to create a drag on the economy today. In fact, if you look at the transformation in the economy and some of the literature, we're just not competitive. A lot of that competitiveness is the socialization, if you will, of our society.

You look at McGuinty's solution here—and he's got a couple of them that he is working on. I believe it was you, Mr. Speaker, who had the bill—or the member from Simcoe North, maybe—on apprenticeship and ratios. They voted it down, but they didn't come up with any solutions. I think of mentoring. The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities is talking about having a college of skills. Well, I think we have to look at the knowledge-based economy challenge in respect to Mr. Marchese's comments here. But even more importantly, the Second Career thing for 20,000 jobs—and they're spending \$1.5 billion in their plan—isn't beginning to address the issue. There is no real plan here; there is \$1.5 billion.

One of my constituents was mentioned, Jeff Statham from Bowmanville—that he is being retrained from the auto industry, hopefully to work in policing. So that what's missing here—and it would be interesting to see, because the Liberals have spoken against this bill, which is about investing in education and training, which Mr. Marchese is very committed to—and the issue here in the real politics of it all is, what is Dalton going to do? He's got the five-point plan. We've got the highest taxes in the world, according to Mr. Martin, and our economy is going south. I am very concerned about the young people. And McGuinty has spent all this money. He has increased spending by about 40%, and it's worse than it has ever been in history. So we're being taxed the highest in the world, and we have a real drag in the economy, because 80% of our economy is with the United States. The future looks bad, and I don't see any plan from Dalton McGuinty whatsoever for the people of Ontario. It's tragic, actually.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I just want to take a little bit of time speaking to the member for Trinity–Spadina’s motion at this point, as opposed to a bill.

When I first arrived here some five years ago, I was working with the then Chair of Management Board, Gerry Phillips, and one of the first roles we undertook during that year was to establish a task force on doing business with the government of Ontario. These are small businesses, primarily, that wanted to do business with government there were lots of impediments to that occurring. The result of that task force has been some work to make it easier in areas like vendors of record and some insurance capacity and the like to allow small businesses to do business here. I say that, in the bit of time I have, for the context. In my view, our job should be to make it easier for business to function, not in a fashion that’s not regulatory, but not add additional complexities to their business environment unnecessarily. Frankly, the motion in front of us would do just that, and the bill in the form it was in would do just that—setting up an additional reporting structure for employers to identify how they are expending those dollars when in effect many employers—I would suggest, most employers—are already expending significant amounts on training, either directly or through mentorship programs in the company which may or may not be captured by this type of structure.

We all support the intent of additional training, but it’s not my view that we should be looking for a means to add a financial burden to business at this point. We’ve been working structurally to reduce that burden over the past four or five years. We’ve done things like the elimination of the capital tax for manufacturers in the forest sector. We made that retroactive because of the demands on business. We’ve increased the small business exemption for taxation by 25%. We’re working on reducing education business taxes for companies. So strategically we’re trying to decrease the financial burden, not add a financial burden and also add a further—I won’t say “a regulatory burden,” but a burden in the context of reporting, of having them try to find ways in which they can identify the work they are already doing on behalf of their employees. We’re working already to expend many millions and millions of dollars on training in Ontario.

Just recently, Durham College in Whitby received \$9 million to expand their skills training centre to develop the skills that young people and adults need, whether it’s directly in the workplace or part of that structure. So we’ve put a lot in place currently to support training. We are going to continue to do that, I would suggest, on an annual basis. We recognize that need. It’s a very high priority. At the same time, we want to ensure that business is as competitive as it can be, particularly in today’s marketplace, and we don’t want to put in place structures that will impede their capacity to want to do business and, frankly, to be able to train the workforce that they need within the workplace.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I have to say that I am disappointed with the Liberals—not the Tories, because I expected them to do what they did, but with the Liberals.

I was saying to the members, “Don’t speak from a prepared speech. Speak from your heart and/or a region lower than the heart.” Then the member for Richmond Hill stands up and says, “I’m speaking from my head.” I call that intellectual rigidity, intellectual frigidity and intellectual fossilization of that brain and others.

Did I attack any of your initiatives when it comes to training? I didn’t attack your initiatives. What I proposed was yet another initiative. This does not replace what you are doing; this is to enhance what you are doing. How could you people—you and the Tories—talk about the need to train a workforce and then stand up and say, “Oh, but the business sector,” as if somehow there’s some magical fairy that you’re waiting for to come and do the work for you?

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How could the corporations say, “We need thousands of people to replace those who are aging and/or retiring and/or are not getting into our field for whatever reason,” and then say, “But we are doing such a fine job”? That’s all you three Liberal members did: refer to the programs you’ve got, as if to suggest that what you’re doing is adequate. Look, you are doing something, but it’s not answering the problems of our shortage of workplace training that is desperately needed, and you know that.

The corporate sector knows this as well. How can the corporate sector say, “We need trained workers,” and then not do anything about it? Who are they waiting for? The magic fairy isn’t coming. The government is obviously providing some support, but clearly it’s not enough, because we desperately need more and more trained workers. Yet you and the other two Liberal members stand up and say: “Well, it’s a nice idea. On the surface it looks fine. I’m a businessman, and this would impact me negatively.” How can it impact you negatively when you desperately need workers who are trained, and you’re saying, “But it’s not up to me; it’s up to the government”? I don’t get it.

The member from Burlington, whom I respect and like, stands up and says, “We need trained workers, but this is the wrong way, presumably, to do it.” Then she makes reference to Harris turning this economy around. Good God; that man, Monsieur Harris, cut so many of our corporate and individual taxes that he left us with a \$5-billion deficit, and then she says he turned that economy around and they want to cut more taxes. I just don’t get it.

They’re in a different world; I understand that. But you fine Liberals, where are you? Why can’t you free yourselves from the texts those young people have written up for you? Look, this is a motion that you could support. You’re not on the hook for your government. You’re not on the hook for your Premier. You can take an independent stand. Mike Colle, you can take an

independent stand. Use some of your intellect sometimes and your free spirit—would that you had some. If you do, use it up and say, “This is a reasonable motion.”

We need a workforce that's trained. We need apprentices. We need to do it and do it fast. This is one proposal that will do it for you. This proposal does not take away anything you are doing; it supplements it. But it says to employers, “You have a responsibility as well to your own workforce and to all the people who need training.” It avoids poaching—I've argued that in my previous comments, and I will repeat it again. It avoids poaching. How does it do that? If you're all obliged to provide training, no one can say, “I'm not opting in,” because you have to give an equivalent amount into a fund that will provide the training.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Minister of Transportation, what is that funny thing you're doing? Come on. Be serious. You guys are not serious.

If you look at Quebec, the only province that's done it—

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Minister of Transportation, listen up a little bit.

The most significant data on the success of the Quebec training levy can be found in a comparison of the surveys of adult education and training throughout Canada conducted by Stats Canada from 1997 to 2002. The largest growth was experienced in Quebec, where the participation rate for any kind of adult educational training increased to 57% from 20%, with significant increases in workplace training driving these changes. It works. Why can't we do it together? We need partnerships between employers and unions and governments. We need a partnership. We need a training culture.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: What are you doing? Just stop with your nonsense. You are doing very little.

This is one suggestion that you could be supporting, and it would create a better-trained workforce that would deal with the needs of employers across Ontario. Would that we had a national training fund, but we don't. The least you can do is support this motion that builds on what Quebec has done, what France initiated and what Ireland has picked up as well. We're looking to a lot of Liberals to use an independent approach on this issue. I didn't attack what you are doing. This is yet one more strategy, one more tool we could use, to make sure our workforce is trained. I hope Liberals will support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time provided for private members' public business has now expired.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I just want to remind the member that you did have two minutes to reply if you would like two more minutes.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I appreciate that, but I thought I had done the two minutes along with the other time. Isn't it amazing how fast we run?

I'm looking to Mr. O'Toole, the member from Durham, to support this motion. I'm looking to other friends, who are not in their seats, to support this motion. I'm looking for all these smiling Liberals to do something different every now and then. Free yourself.

You remember Monsieur Dion, federally, said, “I favour a government role.” Do you remember? He just said it a couple of days ago in the debate, and beyond. He says that he believes in government intervention. Don't you Liberals believe in government intervention, in an institutional role, to get involved, and to oblige the corporations to actually get involved in the training? Don't you believe in that? If you do not believe in that, you're not supporting your federal leader, who believes in the role of governments, presumably, to intervene when needed to solve certain issues.

Where are you, Liberals, when we need you, when people like me need you from time to time? I'm not looking for a lot, just a couple of you—those left-leaning Liberals; I'm sure there are a few. Not you, Minister of Transportation. I see you as a happy, jolly fellow, but not leaning to the left.

Minister of Education—

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Minister of the Environment? Minister of Natural Resources—

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: See? You're not on top.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But are you on top of this issue? That's the better question. Because if you are, I'm appealing to you to support it.

Minister of Education, I'm appealing to you, because you're a left-leaning type. You are a progressive person.

I'm looking forward to seeing some of you stand up and support me. We need five people to stand up here, and I'm going to see which one of you is going to stand up. We've got one—John. We've got you. Are you going to support this?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

MILK IN SCHOOLS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will deal first with ballot item number 40, standing in the name of Mr. Dhillon.

Mr. Dhillon has moved private members' notice of motion number 50. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

LEGISLATIVE CHANNEL

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now deal with ballot item number 41, standing in the name of Mr. Delaney.

Mr. Delaney has moved private members' notice of motion number 44. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

SKILLS TRAINING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now deal with ballot item number 42, standing in the name of Mr. Marchese.

Mr. Marchese has moved a private members' resolution, ballot item number 42. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Oh, sorry. Call in the members, there'll be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1549 to 1554.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Bisson, Gilles
Kormos, Peter

Marchese, Rosario

Tabuns, Peter

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those opposed to the motion will rise and remain standing.

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Brotten, Laurel C.
Bryant, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.
Colle, Mike
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe

Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fonseca, Peter
Hardeman, Ernie
Jaczek, Helena
Kular, Kuldip
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Mangat, Amrit
Moridi, Reza
O'Toole, John

Pendergast, Leeanna
Phillips, Gerry
Ramal, Khalil
Ruprecht, Tony
Sergio, Mario
Sousa, Charles
Takhar, Harinder S.
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 4; the nays are 29.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, I do now call orders of the day.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House does now stand adjourned until Wednesday, October 15, at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1556.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Brotten, Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development / Ministre du Développement économique
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
		Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
		Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture
		Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
		Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
		Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
		Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby—Oshawa	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora—Rainy River	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham—Kent—Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West—Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest—Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges—Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton—Springdale	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea—Gore—Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean—Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga—Brampton South / Mississauga—Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity—Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough— Westdale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa—Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (LIB)	Huron—Bruce	
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York—Simcoe	
Murdoch, Bill (IND)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Orazietti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough—Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres
		Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches—East York	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of International Trade and Investment / Ministre du Commerce international et de l'Investissement
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London—Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland—Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds—Grenville	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme
		Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre
		Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton—Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga—Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services / Ministre des Petites Entreprises et des Services aux consommateurs
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth—Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener—Waterloo	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
		Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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Gilles Bisson, Kim Craitor
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Tim Hudak, Amrit Mangat
Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

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Wayne Arthurs, Toby Barrett
Pat Hoy, Jean-Marc Lalonde
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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Jeff Leal
Reza Moridi, Yasir Naqvi
Lou Rinaldi, John Yakabuski
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

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Andrea Horwath, Phil McNeely
Jerry J. Ouellette, Liz Sandals
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
Bas Balkissoon, Mike Colle
Kim Craitor, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Tony Ruprecht
Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Laurel C. Broten, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Helena Jaczek
Dave Levac, Shafiq Qaadri
Khalil Ramal, Laurie Scott
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Select Committee on Elections / Comité spécial des élections

Chair / Président: Greg Sorbara
Howard Hampton, Greg Sorbara
Norman W. Sterling, David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Health care and social services funding

Mrs. Julia Munro 3241

Confederation Parkway Bridge

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Municipalities

Mr. John O'Toole 3242

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Riding of Etobicoke North

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Hubert Sabourin

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde 3243

Federal-provincial fiscal policies

Mr. Khalil Ramal 3243

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Auditor General Amendment Act, 2008, Bill 110,

Mrs. Munro / Loi de 2008 modifiant la Loi sur le

vérificateur général, projet de loi 110, Mme Munro

First reading agreed to 3244

Mrs. Julia Munro 3244

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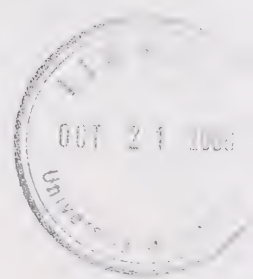
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Wednesday 15 October 2008

Mercredi 15 octobre 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 15 October 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 15 octobre 2008

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the universal prayer of the Hindus.

Prayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Minister of Tourism.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Pursuant to standing order 8(d), there being no business this morning, I ask that the House be recessed until 10:30 a.m.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 8(d), this House is recessed until 10:30 a.m.

The House recessed from 0904 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jim Brownell: It's a privilege for me to stand in the House today to welcome guests from my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, who are here for Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry day. I know that many ministers have opened their doors to meetings today, and I appreciate that. I would like to invite this House and the guests to attend a reception this evening in rooms 228 and 230, where we will feature everything that makes Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry a great place to live, work and play.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to introduce a group of young people who are here from Venezuela: from the National Committee of the Roofless, Luis Gascuez; and from the Afro-Venezuelan Network, Ricardo Scott, Alberto Antonio and Juan Carlos Lombardo. Welcome to Toronto.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: We have in the gallery the grade 10 class from St. Augustine Catholic High School in my riding of Oak Ridges-Markham.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There being no further guests to introduce, it is now time for oral questions. If I may, for just one moment, I want to remind the members that the new revised standing orders are in your desks, so you have them available to you for your perusal.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Working families and seniors in the province of Ontario

are finding it increasingly difficult to make ends meet, let alone in today's economic circumstances. Premier, can you stand up and guarantee Ontario families that there will be no new taxes or tax increases in your upcoming economic statement?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'll let the Minister of Finance speak to the particulars, but what I can say is that we intend to do what families do in the face of economic challenges at home. They certainly don't look for ways to incur new costs, and they certainly wouldn't welcome new expenses—things that are beyond their control—but they do what they have to when it comes to tightening things up and looking at ways to demonstrate restraint. If there are undertakings we've made with respect to new initiatives, then we'll do as families do: We'll look for ways to delay some of those, so that we can proceed in a thoughtful and responsible way. We'll take our cue from Ontario families. I think the most direct thing I can say to my colleague opposite is that I know that families would not be looking forward to undue expenditures imposed upon them by any level of government.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Obviously, working families are facing higher grocery prices. They're facing higher hydro fees, thanks to Dalton McGuinty. They're facing higher taxes, thanks to Dalton McGuinty. They're facing skyrocketing assessment increases this month, leading to property tax increases, thanks to Dalton McGuinty. Of course they won't welcome it.

What I want you to do, though—the buck stops at your desk. Would you please stand in the assembly today and say there will be no tax increases and no new taxes in the upcoming economic statement and, as well, no new user fees or user fee increases?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There will be no new taxes and no new fees in the upcoming economic statement.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, I wish I had asked that question back before Dalton McGuinty brought in the biggest tax increase in the history of our country, despite promises to the contrary.

Interjections.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Now, now, let's hold on a second here—I think the members opposite realize that while Dalton McGuinty says there's no new tax or fee increases, he is bringing in a brand new electronics tax on the backs of working families and seniors in the province of Ontario. Just like Ontario families soundly rejected your friend Stéphane Dion's carbon tax—simply a tax

hike gussied up in a green cloak—you're bringing in a new tax on appliances, on microwaves, on TVs and on tires.

Given the Premier's sudden concern for working families, will you stand up now, Premier, and say that you're going to scrap that ill-advised new tax on electronic goods in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I won't do that, and I know my colleague opposite understands that. We certainly feel on this side of the House that we can both grow this economy—we can do everything we possibly can muster in the context of a serious global economic challenge, but we don't feel that we can give up our responsibility to address environmental issues at the same time. So we're going to have to do something about all those tires that we bury in the province of Ontario; we're going to have to do something about that electronic waste.

We've put forward some thoughtful policies. There are some costs associated with that—I will not deny that—but I think that families also understand that in their interests and in the interests of their children and grandchildren, we have got to come to grips with the waste that we're producing. So we move forward in thoughtful, responsible and, I believe, affordable ways to deal with those issues.

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: Would you agree that increases in business tax rates lead to job losses in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We believe that taxes are a real issue for our businesses and that's why they're part of our plan. So far we've managed to reduce business taxes by \$1.5 billion; fully implemented, we'll be saving Ontario businesses some \$3 billion. My friend opposite knows, as I said several times over, that if we take a look at the discrimination being visited upon Ontarians, on Canadians living in Ontario by Ottawa, we could do more if we were allowed to keep more of our own money, and one of the areas that we could address together would be the level of tax competitiveness for Ontario businesses.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Premier claims that business taxes have come down. I think he believes our memories are very short. Premier, you remember in your first budget, in the largest tax increase in the history of our province, you increased business taxes to make Ontario the most uncompetitive jurisdiction in North America when it comes to tax rates on new business investment. You increased the tax on small businesses. You increased the tax on all businesses, and you brought in a delay of the capital tax in the province. And the result: 200,000-plus well-paying manufacturing jobs have fled the province of Ontario under the Dalton McGuinty government—John Deere, 800 jobs recently; Volvo in Goderich, 500 jobs.

Premier, I'll ask you as well: Will you correct the mistake you made early in your mandate by jacking up

business taxes and commit to a schedule of business tax reductions in your economic statement?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My friend remembers certain things, and even those things that he remembers, I don't recall, but I do remember a \$5.6-billion deficit. That's shown in the public accounts, so that is real.

My colleague opposite knows that we've also done a number of things to help the competitiveness of Ontario businesses when it comes to the levels of taxation. He's dead wrong when he continues to say somehow that we are the least competitive jurisdiction in all North America, and he knows better than that. We have, in fact, a lower combined corporate tax rate than any US state, and I know that my friend recognizes that.

We've also acted to raise the small business tax exemption. We have reduced the business education tax, and we continue to do that, and we've completely eliminated the capital tax for our manufacturers and others who find themselves in the resource-based industries in Ontario.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: It's not just me or the Progressive Conservative caucus; it's your own adviser, Roger Martin, dean of the Rotman School of Management, who comes forward and says that Ontario under Dalton McGuinty is the least competitive jurisdiction, when it comes to business investment, in all of North America.

The Premier clearly does not understand that lowering the tax and regulatory burden on our businesses will actually increase tax revenue in Ontario by helping to create new jobs that are needed in our province. In fact, economist Jack Mintz recently showed that a 1% reduction in Ontario's corporate income tax rate would actually raise federal and provincial revenues by some 18%.

Premier, since a very modest decrease in corporate taxes can have an enormous benefit for Ontario families, help to create jobs, and at the same time increase government revenues to invest in health care and education, will you please stand in your place and confirm that you'll have a schedule of business tax reductions in your economic statement next week?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My friend opposite and several of his colleagues in his caucus have talked about Roger Martin's advice. I listen carefully when Roger Martin speaks, and he has spoken to the issue of tax competitiveness, but he's also spoken over the years about a number of other issues as well. He has said, for example, that we should eliminate the capital tax; we've done that for our manufacturers and resource-based industries. He said that we should focus on increasing apprenticeships; we have 50,000 more young people in the province of Ontario today enrolled in our apprenticeship programs. He specifically said we need to address the dropout rate in the province of Ontario; we've got 10,000 more young people graduating every single year. He said we needed to increase in post-secondary education generally; we've got a \$6.2-billion Reaching Higher plan in place. So what I draw to my friend's

attention is that he does speak to the issue of taxation, but he speaks to many other issues as well, understanding that in order to be competitive, you've got to look at the whole picture.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Premier. The Premier spent a lot of time over the last couple of months talking about his so-called fairness campaign. He wanted people to put up lawn signs and sign his online petition. In a province of 13 million, only 15,000 people bothered to sign the Premier's online petition. Will the Premier now admit that his so-called fairness campaign was a dismal failure and was nothing more than a superficial diversion from the McGuinty government's failure to sustain jobs in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to first of all thank my colleague opposite and all the members of this Legislature for their support in the resolution that we put forward in this House. I want to thank the Ontarians who took some initiative to speak out on behalf of fairness issues. My colleague seems not to have grown enthusiastic about this initiative, and I hope that he develops some enthusiasm. If he doesn't find that in terms of the information that I put forward, I recommend again that he review the TD Economics report, which specified that Canadians living in Ontario are visited with \$11.8 billion by way of discrimination from Ottawa. I think that's a real issue; I think it's a pressing issue. We will continue to press this with all 106 newly elected MPs in the House of Commons.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: On the contrary; the real issue is the 230,000 manufacturing jobs and the 40,000 forest sector jobs that have been lost in this province, and the only answer from the McGuinty government is a phony online petition campaign that gets only 15,000 signatures in a province of 13 million people.

I think the Premier needs to look at the election results. Voters in Welland decided that there's a jobs crisis; voters in Thunder Bay sent a message that there's a jobs crisis; voters in Windsor sent a message that there's a jobs crisis; voters in Sudbury, voters in Timmins, voters in Sault Ste. Marie sent a message that there's a—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I want to thank the members for their interjections and talking about different ridings, but I would like to be able to hear the honourable member ask his question.

Mr. Howard Hampton: All of those voters certainly recognize that there's a jobs crisis in Ontario. When are the Premier and the McGuinty government going to wake up to the fact that there's a jobs crisis in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague fails to see the important connection between our fairness case and our ability to lend further support to folks, particularly in the manufacturing sectors, who are being caught up in the tremendous—

Interjections.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: He fails to see the connection between our ability to lend assistance to families caught up in this tremendous global economic dislocation, particularly in the manufacturing sector, and our fairness campaign. We are sending, according to the TD Economics report, some \$20 billion annually to Ottawa for distribution in other provinces to enable them to provide more support to their industries—to further reduce their corporate taxes, for example. They specify the number as being \$11.8 billion in actual discrimination. If we could keep just a bit more of our own money, then we could do more to lend more help to our manufacturers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The Premier talks about everything other than the loss of manufacturing jobs in Ontario. I wonder when the McGuinty government is going to get it. You are losing manufacturing jobs and forest sector jobs in this province at a rate that is not rivalled anywhere else in Canada, yet the Premier wants to talk about his petition campaign that garnered only 15,000 signatures despite the fact that it's the only thing the Premier has talked about for the last 45 days. How many jobs have to be lost in Ontario before the McGuinty government recognizes you've got a crisis on your hands and an online petition campaign doesn't do one wink of a thing about solving that jobs crisis? How long is it going to take?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I know it's in my honourable colleague's interest to somehow portray our campaign for fairness as being the only thing that we're doing here, but I want to remind him about our five-point plan, and in particular how it speaks to manufacturing concerns.

Fourteen per cent of Ontario jobs are found in manufacturing, so it remains a very important job base for us here. To help our manufacturing base grow stronger, we know they've got to make a transition to a point where they are more competitive. They need more highly skilled and educated workers. We're on to that with our Reaching Higher plan. They need to be able to buy the latest equipment and technology. We're on to that with our advanced manufacturing investment strategy. They need to take advantage of new ideas and innovation. That's what the Ministry of Research and Innovation is all about, at \$1.5 billion in new investments. They need more competitive taxes. That's why we've cut them by \$1.5 billion. They need to know they've got a government that's in their corner and that's prepared to partner with them. That's what our Next Generation of Jobs Fund is all about. Finally, they need good infrastructure so that they can speed their goods to the marketplace. We're all over that as well.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton: To the Premier: The Premier mentions once again the McGuinty government's five-point plan. Let me tell you, John Deere thought so much

of your five-point plan that they announced the layoff of hundreds of workers in Welland. Volvo thought so much of your five-point plan that they've announced the layoff of over 500 workers in Goderich. And Daimler Trucks in St. Thomas thought so much of your five-point plan that they've just announced the layoff of 1,300 workers. Anybody who is watching knows that there are more layoffs to come as all of the parts makers in the St. Thomas area lay off more workers.

Premier, these companies obviously aren't impressed with your five-point plan. If they were, they wouldn't be laying off thousands of workers every week. What is the McGuinty government strategy, other than talking about an online petition that gets 15,000 signatures—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I just won't allow myself to be overcome by despair, as is evident in my colleague opposite. He's prepared to throw in the towel. He's saying that when it comes to the \$11.8-billion discrimination visited on Canadians living in Ontario, he's prepared to give up. When it comes to job losses, he says there's more to come and there's nothing that he can do.

I'm not in that camp. I understand this is a difficult, very challenging time for Ontarians when it comes to what's happening in the global economy and particularly when it comes to what's happening to our manufacturing sector. This has been seen in the US, the UK and Australia. They've gone from 18% of their jobs to 10% of their jobs. We still have 14% of our jobs in the manufacturing sector, and we'll continue to fight as hard as we possibly can to retain every single one of those jobs. But it would be good to know, from time to time, when it comes to a fundamental issue like fairness, that the leader of the NDP was on the side of Ontario workers.

1050

Mr. Howard Hampton: The people who are feeling despair are the laid-off workers: the laid-off workers who look at your so-called Second Careers jobs plan and are only signing up for 10% of the spaces; the laid-off workers who know that your so-called five-point plan doesn't offer them anything either.

We tabled some amendments to the Premier's economy resolution. I want to ask the Premier if he's prepared to support any of them: an industrial hydro rate to help manufacturers; a jobs commissioner to help at-risk companies; and a Buy Ontario policy, especially in the transit sector, so we can help sustain manufacturing jobs. Is the Premier prepared to act on any of those things to help sustain manufacturing jobs, or does he want to talk about his 15,000-signature online petition?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There's an ongoing debate, and I look forward to the conclusion of that debate and then taking a look at all of the ideas put forward by all members of this House. But let's do a bit of compare-and-contrast here. My friend opposite is suggesting that we need to put in place in Ontario a jobs commissioner. They tried that in BC. That didn't work and they got rid of it. On the other hand, he is critical of our program to reach out to 20,000 Ontarians who have lost their jobs

recently and to offer them up to two years of publicly subsidized retraining.

I know we're having a challenge in terms of attracting people in great numbers to that. I know it's tough, if you're 52 and you've lost the job and you've got a mortgage and you've got a couple of kids, to go back to work for a couple of years. But we're looking at ways to improve that program, to make it more attractive to Ontarians who have lost their jobs. We know that in order to help transition our manufacturing sector, we've got to continue to upgrade the skills and education levels of our workers. That's why we're so committed to that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The Premier needs to look at his own fiction. The jobs commissioner was credited with helping to sustain almost 100,000 jobs in British Columbia. It was the new Liberal government that got rid of it, a new Liberal government there that doesn't have a jobs plan either.

The Premier says that a jobs commissioner wouldn't work. Well, Premier, I think it's better than anything you've come up with. But I mentioned an industrial hydro rate; I mentioned a Buy Ontario strategy; I mentioned, for example, tougher plant closure legislation. These are all part of an NDP amendment before the Legislature. Is the Premier prepared to vote for them and put them in place in Ontario so we can actually do something practical to help sustain jobs in Ontario, or is the Premier going to go on talking about his 15,000-signature online petition?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The honourable member mentioned a Buy Ontario plan, and he should know that over 80% of the investment that we're making in public transit will result in dollars being spent here in the province of Ontario for our businesses and our workers.

Hon. George Smitherman: He's against public transit.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: He was against investing in more public transit.

He made reference earlier on to Thunder Bay. But just to give you an example of the continuing partnerships that we're striking, today, Minister Cansfield is in Thunder Bay. She's announcing a new investment in Abitibi-Bowater. This government is putting in \$1.5 million to help the company increase its energy efficiency. That efficiency will help the company secure about 350 well-paying jobs. It's a good example of government working hand in hand with industry in difficult economic times to secure good Ontario jobs.

FEDERAL ELECTION

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, Ontarians gave a stronger mandate to Prime Minister Harper and the Conservative Party, and they also provided 11 more seats. Yesterday, as well, both Dion and Layton indicated that in light of the economic challenges facing this country, they were prepared to work in co-operation with the Prime Minister.

I'm asking you today, Premier: Are you prepared to put aside your partisan fairness campaign and work cooperatively with the federal government on behalf of all Ontarians in order that we can benefit and keep the jobs in this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to take the opportunity to congratulate, first of all, all those who presented themselves as candidates in this recent federal election. I congratulate all the leaders. I congratulate Prime Minister Harper on his success and I look forward to working with him and his government. But in particular, I'll be bringing some particular focus to 106 newly elected Ontario MPs, and I need them to do what MPs representing other provinces do on a regular basis and without hesitation, and that is, from time to time, to stand up on behalf of the folks who sent them in the first place.

There is a real issue—and I know I have my colleague's support on this. It has to do with this \$11.8-billion unfairness or, to use the wording of the TD Economics report, "discrimination visited on Canadians living in the province of Ontario." I know I can count on my colleague's support when it comes to that particular issue.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Again to the Premier: There is an opportunity for us to make a fresh start. The people have spoken, it's time to move forward, and the opposition has indicated their willingness to work with the government in light of the economic challenges that face our province and our country.

People in this province expect us to work in cooperation. I ask you today: What new steps are you prepared to take to work in cooperation with the federal government to ensure that Ontarians retain their jobs and have access to new jobs in order that they can continue to have the quality of life we enjoy in this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I look forward to working with the federal government. I can say that I will be attending a meeting of the Premiers and Ministers of Finance representing the various provinces and territories in Montreal this coming Monday. We will gather together to assess the new landscape when it comes to federal politics and chart a course that is designed to ensure that we cooperate with the federal government so that we can together come to grips with these financial challenges.

I can say as well that I appreciate the spirit of cooperation and collegiality offered by my colleague opposite, but I think one of the things that we have got to stand strong on is this whole issue of fairness. We cannot escape out from under this; it is real. I can tell you, in every other province and every other territory they wouldn't allow it to happen. We need to come together, we need to stick together and we need to press the case in particular with 106 newly elected Ontario MPs—and I congratulate them once again.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Premier. Mr. Premier, as we speak here today in the Legislature,

hard-working Ontarians are getting more nasty surprises in the mail. All across Ontario, property owners are receiving assessment increases averaging 20%, and property taxes are going up for many Ontarians at a time when property values across the province are starting to fall; they're in decline.

Mr. Premier, will you admit that it's time to do away with the market-based approach, which your party has embraced, and turn to the NDP's freeze-till-sale assessment model? We believe it's an idea whose time has come.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Jim Watson: The honourable member, as a former mayor, surely realizes that an assessment increase does not equate automatically to a tax increase. He knows that; anyone who served in municipal government or who receives an assessment notice knows that. That's point number one.

Secondly, we very much appreciate the input from the Ombudsman, who brought forward a series of recommendations. Those recommendations have now been implemented. Let me quote the Ombudsman's 2008 report. He said, "The Municipal Property Assessment Corp. and the government have come closer to Getting It Right ... by implementing my recommendations for reforming property assessment in Ontario...."

"Newly introduced legislation will bring greater fairness to the system of property assessment and appeal."

We respect the Ombudsman's work, we acted on his recommendations and we believe that the municipal governments have the tools necessary to ensure an orderly transition—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: To the minister: As a former mayor and a minister, he must surely realize as well that anyone whose property tax goes up above the average for the municipality invariably will get a tax increase. We are suggesting in our freeze-till-sale model that property taxes be frozen until the time they are sold. This would ensure that seniors and others on fixed incomes are not forced out of their homes and away from friends and families.

Will the minister admit that it is precisely at the time of mass layoffs and declining property values that Ontario should reject the Conservative-inspired market-based approach to property taxes and bring in an assessment model that puts people first?

1100

Hon. Jim Watson: First of all, I would challenge the honourable member to bring forward one jurisdiction in Canada that has his frozen-until-sale model, because, quite frankly, that would bring even greater inequities into the system.

Secondly, he talks passionately now about supporting senior citizens. Where was he and where was his party when this government brought forward a senior citizens' property tax credit? They voted against it. They turned

their back on senior citizens, and now, in feigned outrage, they're concerned about seniors. You should have been there for the vote, and you should have voted with us to bring forward a senior citizens' tax credit.

Finally, the municipalities, particularly his own municipality, have benefited from \$238 million in investment in Ontario funds for infrastructure in his city. What did he do when that money was in the budget? He voted against it. Shame on the NDP.

INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL

Mr. Jim Brownell: My question is to the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. Minister, first, I know that you will join me in welcoming the representatives of my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry who are here at Queen's Park today.

As MPP for the riding, I have had the privilege of hosting most of cabinet in my riding. I think the Minister of Northern Development and Mines is perhaps the only one who has not been to visit and I certainly encourage him to come down and experience our hospitality.

Those ministers who have had the opportunity to see the good work being done to foster a complete renaissance in my riding have been quite impressed. They have had the chance to meet with community leaders, many of whom are here today, and discuss with them first-hand their plan for community growth.

Many communities across the province, including those smaller communities, face challenges investing in their infrastructure priorities. How is this government helping municipalities invest in the important infrastructure in their communities?

Hon. George Smitherman: I want to join with my honourable friend in acknowledging and welcoming the good folks from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry. I had a chance to meet with them this morning. We welcome them to the Legislature.

Levels of infrastructure investment in our province this year are unprecedented, and many of those are programs focused particularly at smaller communities. In the Cornwall area, we have one project, as an example, the McConnell/CN bridge rehabilitation project, which is part of our MIII program, which put \$450 million into communities. As part of the Investing in Ontario Act, announced at the AMO meeting in August, \$1.1 billion is being provided to area municipalities, more than \$10 million of that in the united counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry. We've also launched, with the government of Canada, the first component of the communities fund of the Building Canada fund. Closing on November 21, it will put \$200 million—\$100 million from the province and \$100 million from the federal government—to be matched by one third contributions from the smaller municipalities; all part and parcel of the largest investments in infrastructure—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Brownell: Minister, I think you have probably been the minister who has visited my riding the

most, and I certainly know that you have been a steady friend to myself and my constituents.

One of the things I love to hear when you, our colleagues and anyone else comes on a repeated basis to the community in my riding is, "Wow, there's been a lot of positive change around here." Credit for that goes to the dedication and groundbreaking work being done by community groups and the municipalities themselves. I would certainly like to congratulate them on the good work they are doing.

As our infrastructure improves, businesses are looking at our corner of Ontario as a great place to establish next-generation industry, particularly in terms of renewable energy. Minister, can you tell us what our government is doing to encourage this type of development in Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry?

Hon. George Smitherman: First off, I would like to acknowledge the extent to which the R.H. Saunders generating station in Cornwall is such an important asset in the Ontario energy supply mix, with hydroelectric capacity operating since 1958 at more than 1,000 megawatts.

Exciting progress is being made as well through initiatives of the Ministry of Research and Innovation, who are working with Verdant Power Canada for a green energy project to use innovative water turbines to tap even more of the powerful capacities of the St. Lawrence and other rivers in Ontario. We want to maximize our potential to take advantage of those sources of energy which do not have a fuel source, which are not carbon-related. Accordingly, rivers, like the progress that I mentioned before at R.H. Saunders, are very essential to the new generation of green-collar jobs. We're going to continue to work to build on the 530 megawatts of additional renewable capacity that has already been installed, supporting innovative projects like the one that's ongoing in the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is for the Premier. Because of your government's policies, hundreds of new and young farmers were cheated out of the support they deserve. When your Minister of Finance releases his statement, can you assure us there will be support for these farmers?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Our government certainly values the agriculture industry and our producers, and we have been there for them over the last four years. That is why our government has spent \$1.1 billion in extraordinary money—money that was not in our budget—over the last four years.

A year ago, on December 12, the Minister of Finance announced \$150 million to support the cattle, hog and horticulture industries—the only province in Canada to provide this kind of support to those struggling sectors. We consulted with the stakeholders in those sectors. We

took their advice. They said they needed the money as soon as possible. We used the information we had in our system, and we had those cheques to farmers, \$130 million for cattle and hog and horticulture—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: You gave out a lot of money, and the hog producers said they needed it very quickly. Their job was to get it out quickly. Your job was to see that it went to the right people, and you failed miserably on that front.

These farmers create jobs in the rural economy. Some of them are spending millions of dollars a year and hiring numerous people in our rural community. They don't understand why your government won't help them so they can continue farming. You're helping others, but you're not helping these farmers—hundreds of them—who got absolutely nothing out of all that money you're talking about.

Can you assure us that the Minister of Finance will include in the economic statement a way of supporting these farmers, who so far have got absolutely nothing from you?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I think it's very important that I take this opportunity to say that our government has provided \$150 million in extraordinary money, which no other province in this nation did. Any farmer who participated in the federal cost of production top-up and would have had application by September 2007 would have qualified for a payment on the Ontario cattle, hog and horticulture program. We have rolled that money out in record time. We have delivered what the agriculture community said they needed most to address long-standing losses in those sectors. I have letters from stakeholders to thank this government for our prompt response. We have been there for farmers in the province of Ontario for the last five years, and we will continue to be there for farmers—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. New question.

CHILD ABUSE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services: Last week, two men were arrested for the alleged sexual assault of a 12-year-old girl who stayed at Benevenga Day Care in Etobicoke. Parents in the area simply want to know why this child care centre is still operating.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Of course, we put a huge amount of importance on the safety of our children. When they are in a licensed child care setting, we do everything we can to ensure the safety of our children. We continue to strengthen the child care system. We've added spaces, and we continue to improve the quality of care in those centres.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, last week it was the principal, Edmonda Gilfillan, of the nearby Venerable John Merlini school, who took it upon herself to send a

letter to parents and guardians making them aware of the serious situation. Not this minister, but the principal of a nearby school had to inform the community. The community sees a huge vacuum in the ministry's monitoring, or lack thereof, or enforcement, or lack thereof, of these kinds of unlicensed facilities in the province. They've asked me to ask this minister why the McGuinty government won't close down a child care centre where police allege child abuse has occurred.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It's important to note that this is not a licensed child care facility. When a centre is licensed, we of course have a very high standard of care. When a centre is unlicensed, it is the parents' responsibility to ensure the safety of their children. So the onus is on parents, when it is an unlicensed facility, to take responsibility.

1110

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got question today for the Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services. My riding of Oakville, as you know, is a home to many successful small and medium-sized businesses. Oakville has got a thriving chamber of commerce and three business improvement areas. All these businesses are a vital part of our economy. They provide local jobs. They turn great ideas into products and services.

Often, I hear from many small business owners who are expressing concern with government forms and red tape. What is the government doing to help? How can we help so that small and medium-sized business owners can focus more on making their business a success and less on filling out forms?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I want to thank the member from Oakville for asking this question. Almost 98% of the businesses in Ontario are actually small businesses. They create over 50% of the jobs in Ontario in the private sector and about \$250 billion worth of economic activity, so they are definitely the engine of economic growth in Ontario.

We are very committed to making sure that they spend most of their time not filling out government forms, but rather focusing on their business. That's why a special secretariat has been created, and in my supplementary I will be able to tell the member what we have done in terms of reducing the burden for the business forms and how we have automated all the business forms for small business.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you, Minister, for that answer. Under previous governments, red tape was allowed to grow, regulations grew and paperwork grew. Small business expressed their concern through the small business agency, and small businesses, including the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, expressed specific concern with the paper burden that applies to small business.

Minister, would you explain to this House and to small business owners all across Ontario how you plan to reduce paper burden in Ontario for small business?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I want to thank the member again for asking the question. For the last three years, we have been moving in a systematic way to reduce the paper burden for small and medium-sized business. In phase one, seven key ministries reduced the paperwork by about 24 percentage points. In the second phase, another eight ministries reduced the paperwork burden by more than 25% in their ministries. And in the third phase, 10 ministries are working diligently to reduce paperwork more in their own ministries.

Not only have we reduced the paperwork, but we have also automated a lot of the paperwork, so that the small and medium-sized businesses don't have to fill out the same information again and again. We are also working on cap and trade so that the rules and regulations stay where they are—and, if anything, that they should be reduced—and that businesses can focus on the business rather than on filling out forms.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is for the Premier. In 1885, the famous circus elephant Jumbo was killed in St. Thomas, crushed by a locomotive. Today, another giant has died in St. Thomas, crushed by the economic downturn which plagues Ontario's manufacturing sector. Daimler has announced it will close the Sterling truck plant next year, leaving 1,400 people without jobs. And in nearby Tillsonburg, at DDM Plastics, more than 400 people lost their jobs last week.

Premier, the five-point plan you love so much is not working in southwestern Ontario. It is an outdated plan, not relevant to the new economic realities of the present. When you release your economic statement on October 22, can we expect a new plan for Ontario's new era?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I'll give the member the benefit of the doubt with respect to the analogy, but I don't think it's an attempted joke that would find much laughter in the community of St. Thomas. Obviously it is a very difficult time for many workers and for many citizens. That is why this government is reaching out and seeking to work with labour, management, the mayor and our local member of provincial Parliament in trying to do everything that the province can, firstly to see if there is a way in which an alternative might come about that would see those jobs stay in St. Thomas, and secondly, through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to work with those people who face this—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Just like Jumbo, I think I hear the train a-coming. Ontario's manufacturing sector is a train wreck. On the one hand, the minister pretends to be flexible, engaging the opposition in a partisan and inappropriate economic debate. But when asked, the minister shows that he has no intention of changing course, no plan for a new economic era in Ontario. In southwestern Ontario, where the former PC government helped to

attract thousands of jobs through policies that adapted to the times, families and communities are suddenly insecure.

Minister, last night, many Ontarians voted for change. Will you heed their advice and give Ontario a new economic plan?

Hon. Michael Bryant: The question was about the news in St. Thomas, so I'll not—as much as I'd like to—jump on the member's political commentary on the result. The mayor has said—I think, helpfully—in the event that it is the case that those jobs cannot be saved, that does not mean there cannot be, through entrepreneurship, small businesses and through skills training, new jobs—second-generation jobs for Ontario. That's why this government has a second-generation jobs fund that makes those investments to allow those new companies to expand or, in fact, to be established. That's why this government has an advanced manufacturing loan program to allow this. That's why this government has the Ontario Centres of Excellence to help some of these enterprises to start. That is the plan of this—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Minister of Energy: The government's electricity planners have once again grossly overestimated electricity demand growth in order to make the case to build new and expensive nuclear power plants. Ontario teeters on the verge of a recession and electricity demand is declining further. Your government admits that it's facing a budget crisis and it might not be able to meet its core commitments, such as reducing poverty. Can the minister tell us when the government will revise its electricity forecast to reflect the real demand for energy, so that billions of dollars of taxpayers' money are not wasted producing energy that's not needed?

Hon. George Smitherman: I do want to thank the honourable member for the backhanded compliment at the success that has been made to date with respect to conservation in the province of Ontario. Through the good work of the Ontario Power Authority and local distribution companies, and through the efforts of hundreds of thousands of Ontarians, it's true to be able to say that there's a demonstrated reduction in some of the energy needs in the province of Ontario. Of course, it's prudent to always keep one's eye on the progress of that matter.

The honourable member did make a misstatement, I think, with respect to nuclear power. It's our government's intention to continue to ensure going forward that Ontario has a reliable supply of nuclear power in about the exact amount as we've had it here for a good number of decades. This is providing Ontarians with a very reliable and relatively inexpensive form of power.

In supplementary, I'll be happy to talk to the honourable member about the advances that we are making in expanding renewable sources of energy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The minister is talking about a drop in demand far beyond what his planners predicted. Yet he's continuing to go forward with plans to build more expensive nuclear power. He knows that more jobs can be created with renewable power, more jobs with conservation, and more opportunities in a world where the new energy economy is developing. Why are you clinging so hard to a nuclear future?

1120

Hon. George Smitherman: What the honourable member is afraid to acknowledge is that it's not about a nuclear future; it's about the reality of our nuclear past and present. What we're seeking to do is to ensure that, going forward, our fleet of nuclear power plants is able to produce, relatively speaking, the same level of energy that they have for a couple of decades in the province of Ontario. But we're eliminating coal. This is a very, very important step, and it's the opportunity that provides us with expansion of renewable energy—to date, about 530 megawatts of installed renewable, and thousands of additional megawatts of renewable energy in the pipeline.

I've asked those who developed the integrated power system plan to take a harder look as to whether we might actually encourage even greater contribution of renewable energy in Ontario's supply mix, and that work is ongoing at present.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Mr. Khalil Ramal: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Just recently, a couple in my riding gave birth to their son, who was born at 26 weeks, weighing barely one pound, seven ounces. When babies are born this prematurely, they require significant medical attention and critical care. My constituents have heard stories of mothers having to be rushed south of the border to receive the special care that is required when babies are born prematurely.

What sort of reassurance can I provide to my constituents, and what is our government doing to support the delivery of healthy babies here in Ontario?

Hon. David Caplan: I want to thank the member for London—Fanshawe for the question because our government is doing everything we can to make sure that our most vulnerable receive the care they need in the time that they need it.

In exceptional emergency circumstances, when acute, life-threatening circumstances require immediate services, our hospitals contact CritiCall to determine the next most suitable treatment bed. However, it is our government's priority to make sure that Ontarians receive the care they need here in Ontario. That's why we're investing \$7 million in a maternal-newborn access-to-care strategy. This investment will provide increased access to quality care and services for critically ill infants and their mothers. Part of this \$7-million funding will provide six more neonatal intensive care beds. These new beds will help 129 critically ill infants this year alone.

And soon, the province will screen for pre-term labour and for critical premature eye diseases, conditions which directly impact the health—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Ensuring the best possible start in life for infants and children is not only a universal obligation driven by compassion, but it's one of the most practical means of ensuring a healthier population in the future. I know my constituents will be happy to learn that this government is taking great steps in this area.

While this investment provides peace of mind to expecting mothers, our government needs to continue to look out for our children as they grow. My constituents in London—Fanshawe would like to know what the government is doing for our youngest Ontarians when it comes to wait times and pediatric surgery in our hospitals. Our province currently focuses on wait times for key surgery for adults. The parents of my youngest constituents—what is our government doing for the youngest ones?

Hon. David Caplan: Along with the maternal-newborn access-to-care strategy, we're investing an additional \$7.2 million to increase pediatric surgeries in key specialty areas and to reduce wait times. That means more than 4,200 additional pediatric surgeries, including dental, eye, ear, nose and throat surgeries, as well as orthopaedic and urology surgeries.

Since we began focusing on pediatric wait times, we've seen wait times for pediatric surgeries drop by approximately 17%. In London—and I know the member from London—Fanshawe is interested—London Health Sciences will receive over \$480,000 for 164 additional cases. These surgical procedures were identified by the pediatric action committee as provincial priorities and include additional dental/oral surgeries, ophthalmology surgeries, plastic surgeries, urology, orthopedic, and ear, nose and throat.

Ontario is the first—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister.

TOURISM

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Premier. Ontario's tourism industry needs the Premier's help now. What new initiatives to support tourism will be included in next week's economic statement?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Tourism.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'm delighted to have the opportunity today to speak to the House again about Ontario's competitiveness study, which is well under way. As members in the House know, last week we discussed the tourism summit that was held last week. It was very successful, and all the buzz at the tourism summit was about the great work that Greg Sorbara is doing on his competitiveness study across the province.

We anticipate that, with this study, we will have a game plan for the future of tourism in Ontario. We expect that the study will be released in the new year, and we

know that Mr. Sorbara is working very hard on behalf of all of the tourism stakeholders. He's also meeting with stakeholders that are not in the tourism industry but that have input into the industry. It's a well-thought-out study and it has a number of studies being integrated into his report. We look forward to and appreciate very much the work he is doing on behalf of the industry.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: The House should be aware of the fact that the tourism industry has offered numerous thoughtful, well-researched proposals which the government could act upon next week; for example, a new centre of excellence for tourism, working collaboratively, a best-of-the-best philosophy of continuous improvement, a tourism committee of cabinet, and many more.

The minister does not have to wait many more months for the member for Vaughan to complete his tourism study. What specific initiatives can the tourism industry expect in next week's economic statement, and will the government offer hope to this \$23-billion industry that employs 200,000 Ontarians?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: In fact, we are not waiting; we have been investing. Since 2006, we have invested 14.5 million new dollars into the tourism industry. Just this year alone, we have been investing in Celebrate Ontario. We also initiated a new marketing initiative, There's No Place Like This, which has seen a 5% increase in domestic tourism this year.

We are investing in festivals across the province. Just this past Friday, I had the opportunity to be in Kitchener-Waterloo for Oktoberfest, where we had invested an additional \$260,000 in their new program, which was held a week before Oktoberfest. There were thousands of people out; it was a sunny day. To Leeanna Pendergast and John Milloy, thank you for the wonderful welcome. It was a great day to tap the keg and celebrate with the people of Kitchener-Waterloo—another great investment by this government into the tourism industry and into the festivals and attractions across the province.

ONTARIO MUNICIPAL BOARD

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Housing. A subsidiary of developer giant Geranium is asking the Ontario Municipal Board to force a citizens' group to cover the company's \$3.2-million legal bill. To say this claim will scare citizens' groups off from speaking out is a gross understatement. Why will you not intervene and support a community's democratic right and ability to challenge large developers?

Hon. Jim Watson: The honourable member would know that the matter is before the Ontario Municipal Board and it would be entirely inappropriate for me, as a minister of the crown, to comment on that specific case.

I can say that the history of the OMB is that it is authorized to award costs; it does very rarely, and when someone's conduct is clearly unreasonable, frivolous or in bad faith.

The other point is that this government, through OMB reform, in fact did a number of measures, including establishing the citizen liaison office that assists individuals appearing before the OMB. These are progressive measures; they're reasonable measures. But with respect to the specific case that the honourable member refers to, I cannot comment on that because it is before the board.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Clearly, the outcome of the hearing is less important than the fact that it's happening at all, and clearly the changes you've made to the OMB have not prevented this abuse of democracy. The developer is seeking costs to scare citizens' groups across the province away from public participation. The minister has been silent. As the Toronto Star put it, "Watson can't just sit on the sidelines forever." So I'm asking you again, Minister, why will you not intervene and support a community's democratic right and ability to challenge large developers?

Hon. Jim Watson: It's the same question; the honourable member will receive the same answer. If I were to intervene in this case, who would be the first up, ranting and raving and criticizing me for intervening in an OMB case? As the honourable member knows, the OMB is a quasi-judicial body, and it would be entirely inappropriate for a minister to intervene or to comment on a matter that is before the board.

We did make a number of significant changes. I commend my colleagues the Attorney General and my predecessor, who is now the Minister of the Environment, for the work they did in terms of establishing the citizens' liaison office. The quality of appointees that this government has put on the OMB is something I'm also particularly proud of. But for me to intervene in the case or to comment would be entirely inappropriate and I just won't do that.

1130

YOUTH SERVICES

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Too often youth are shown in a negative light in the media. Most young people aren't involved in crime and are hard-working, but they need the opportunity to achieve their potential. Minister, what is our government doing to help kids achieve their potential and keep them away from crime?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me thank the member from Ajax-Pickering for his relentless advocacy for better opportunities for kids in this province.

Under my predecessor at the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, Mary Anne Chambers, our government created the youth opportunities strategy to help youth in high-needs neighbourhoods have the opportunity to be successful. One component of the youth opportunities strategy is the youth in policing initiative. It's an incredible opportunity for youth from priority neighbourhoods in Ottawa, Toronto, London, Durham, Hamilton, Windsor and Thunder Bay to spend their summers working side by side with police officers.

Youth in the youth in policing initiative work in all areas of policing. For example, this summer, youth in the Toronto Police Service helped to catalogue and organize almost 3,000 stolen bicycles. The—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Joe Dickson: There is no doubt that this is a valuable program. It's a great way for any youth to spend the summer, learning important skills, while at the same time earning money. It's also a great way for young people to become involved in their communities. Would the minister be good enough to tell us what the police have to say about this particular program?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Not only do the program graduates rave about their experience and many of them start thinking about a career in policing, but the police are also huge supporters of the program and are extremely proud of their graduates. It's an opportunity for young people to learn more about the work police do, but it's also an opportunity for the police to learn more about young people in those high-priority neighbourhoods. I've spoken with several police who have participated in the program and they tell me it truly is a tremendous learning experience for them. Police love having young, eager people to work with them in the summer, and they also recognize that these youth become ambassadors of the police to other young people in those neighbourhoods.

The youth opportunities strategy helped over 1,800 youth find summer jobs this year, including the 162 participants in the youth in policing program. It's a great program that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

STANDING ORDERS

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: There appears to be some concern about the way the standing orders are taking place today. According to standing order 8(a), question period was to start at 10:35 a.m., according to the standing orders we've received. Question period started at 10:32 instead of 10:35, and I would ask to make sure there is some clarity so that individuals who are preparing for oral questions comply with the standing orders and that we are making sure that we're following the guidelines that are established for us.

Hon. Michael Bryant: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker: An excellent intervention. We're going to need to coordinate whether it's the lunar calendar or it's Greenwich Mean Time that we're going to apply to.

I say to all members of the House, a five-minute bell will ring, as is in the standing orders. When the five-minute bell rings, it means that it's five minutes from question period beginning, although I bet that there will be some coordination of times and ensuring that the member from Oshawa's watch matches the Speaker's watch.

We appreciate the intervention—and I bet that question period will start at 10:35 in the future—and appreciate his keeping an eye on the clock.

Mr. Peter Kormos: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker: Of course, and New Democrats want to make it very clear that question period doesn't start until the Speaker starts it. Whenever the Speaker arrives and starts question period is the right time, as far as New Democrats are concerned, and variations in timepieces from member to member notwithstanding, we respect the leadership of the Speaker in this regard.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank all the honourable members. I will remind the House that standing order 36 says "up to five minutes" for the introduction of guests, and it's a bit of a presumption that maybe the full five minutes isn't needed. I do admit that, in trying to ensure the flow of the business of the House, I moved directly to question period, trying to make the best use of the time within this House.

I appreciate the point of order. I will watch the clock. I will remind members, too, that it says "up to five minutes," and that if anybody is going to go beyond the five minutes on introduction of guests, I will be shutting them down on that as well.

Thank you to the member from Oshawa and to the other two members as well.

This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1136 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of page Sarah Holman—she has had some guests here at the Legislature—today we'd like to welcome her mother, Suzanne Holman; her father, Tim Holman; her sister, Laura Holman; and her brother, Sean Holman.

As well, on behalf of Paige Weller, her guests today have been her uncle, Eric Clarke; her grandmother, Norma Weller; and her grandfather, Jim Weller.

We welcome those guests, and we welcome the re-enactors, who I'm assuming are from Cornwall. Welcome today.

Mr. Jim Brownell: Mr. Speaker, if I could make a statement in welcoming the interpreters from Upper Canada Village: It was going to be part of my statement this afternoon, but certainly we're very happy that they are going to be here to welcome everybody to the reception this afternoon in rooms 228 and 230.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GROVES MEMORIAL COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

Mr. Ted Arnott: Once again, I rise in this House to call upon the Minister of Health to expedite the approval for our new Groves Memorial Community Hospital in the township of Centre Wellington.

Last week, I spoke to the minister to follow up on the urgent letter I sent to him last month. Briefly, the situ-

ation is this: On September 11, I met with hospital representatives and ministry staff in the minister's boardroom. We made a strong case for moving the Groves proposal to the next stage of planning to get the project moving forward again. We are prepared to work in co-operation with the Waterloo-Wellington Local Health Integration Network, but the minister cannot use this as an excuse for further delay. Delays have plagued this project for far too long already. We have been working on this proposal in the township of Centre Wellington since 2001. Our communities are rightfully expecting progress, not new roadblocks.

I think I can safely say there is no hospital in Ontario that has stronger community support than Groves. I urge the minister to acknowledge that community support, approve our proposal/business case submission, and move us forward to the functional program stage of planning for the new hospital immediately.

BRAMPTON SAFE CITY ASSOCIATION

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I rise today in the House to congratulate the city of Brampton for a top score of 20 out of 20 in the annual Safe Communities Canada report card released by the Safe Communities Foundation of Canada.

It was one year ago that Brampton was designated an international safe community by the World Health Organization in recognition of their capacity to deliver safety education and programs and a proven ability to work together with community partners. Brampton is one of 10 municipalities in North America and the first municipality in the greater Toronto area to achieve this designation.

The Brampton Safe City partnership was formed in 1997 and currently has 36 member agencies and citizens. This speaks to the high involvement level of the citizens of Brampton to ensure that their community is as safe as it can be. Programs and services are delivered in eight key areas, including children's safety, fire prevention, safety for seniors, workplace safety, emergency preparedness, road safety, crime reduction and violence prevention for youth.

Brampton has invested considerable time and effort to develop a culture of safety and injury prevention. They've worked hard to mobilize citizens to make a difference. Please join me in congratulating Brampton on its safe-city distinction.

KEN ROSS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: "Good things grow in Ontario" is more than just a catchy jingle. It speaks to both locally grown produce in our province and the Ontario retailers who promote it in their grocery stores.

Today, Foodland Ontario will be honouring one such retailer, Ken Ross, owner of Ross' Your Independent Grocer in Barrhaven, with the Foodland Ontario Retailer Award. Ken and his produce manager, Gilles Laporte, are this year's gold category winners.

I can tell you why Ross' Your Independent Grocer is a gold category winner. Summer, winter, fall; rain, hail, snow or sleet; regardless of the weather or the season, their Ontario produce is the most bountifully, beautifully and proudly displayed.

The gold category award winners for best produce display also have a heart of gold. Ken and his wife, Kelly, have owned and operated Ross' Your Independent Grocer for six years now and have since given back almost \$1 million to our community through donations and allowing community groups to use their store as a fundraising venue.

Congratulations go out in this Ontario Legislature today to Ken and Kelly Ross, Gilles Laporte and, of course, all of the staff at Ross' Your Independent Grocer for winning the Foodland Ontario Retailer Award, and thank you to them for all that they do for the riding of Nepean-Carleton and the people they represent in Barrhaven.

RIDING OF STORMONT-DUNDAS-SOUTH GLENGARRY

Mr. Jim Brownell: I am sure that all of us at one point in time have enjoyed a McIntosh apple, but did you know that the very first McIntosh apple tree was propagated in my riding at Dundela, Dundas county?

Did you know that Ontario's first Premier, John Sandfield Macdonald, was born in St. Raphaels, Glengarry county?

You have likely enjoyed a movie starring the latest Hollywood star, Ryan Gosling, but did you know he was raised in Cornwall?

My riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry has always been a hotbed of talent, ranging from authors to athletes, actors, businessmen and politicians. The leaders of my community—many with us here at the Legislature today—have time and again demonstrated the ability to turn adversity into opportunity. Thanks to their work and the support of this government, my riding is facing a renaissance on many fronts.

The people of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry have a proud and diverse heritage, ranging from First Nations to United Empire Loyalists, from home children to new Canadians. They have added to the fabric of our communities.

I encourage everyone here in this Legislature and in the precinct to come out and learn more about my riding, be welcomed by interpreters from Upper Canada Village and meet with the community leaders first-hand at the Stormont, Dundas and South Glengarry Day reception today between 5 and 8 p.m. in rooms 228 and 230. I welcome you all and hope that you will attend.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, you and the other members today have learned of yet another community suffering the loss of manufacturing jobs. The closing of

the Daimler AG plant in St. Thomas next year will cost approximately 1,300 jobs. The families will be devastated.

Last June, the members will recall an announcement that the award-winning GM truck plant in Oshawa would be closing in July 2009. This means the loss of approximately 2,600 jobs, many in my riding of Durham.

This House must, at this time, recognize that each plant closure is a devastating loss for the communities and the families they represent. What's disturbing is the lack of an effective plan from the McGuinty government for the recovery of the manufacturing sector in Ontario. The losses of jobs in my riding and indeed across Ontario, not just St. Thomas, will not be solved by ignoring the problem.

In the federal election, Prime Minister Harper explained his \$8.6-billion focused, achievable plan for responding to Canada's economic challenges. This plan includes initiatives to create jobs, support manufacturing and support small business.

I urge this House and the Premier to work together with our federal and local governments to repair and renew Ontario's economy. Let's have the plan. The discussion is on, and there's no plan from the McGuinty government at this time.

POVERTY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I rise to read a letter from a very feisty grandmother. She directs it to:

"Dear Liberal MPPs:

"Do you know that last week Madeleine Meilleur, in her capacity as Minister of Community and Social Services, cut off funding for all Ontario grandchildren being raised by their grandparents? Now thousands of families will no longer receive Ontario Works temporary care assistance.

"Although the financial amount is very small (about \$200 a month), there is also limited drug, dental and eyeglass coverage. Without this, most families will not have any extended health coverage for their grandchildren. And what about food, shelter, clothing?

"The Ontario Liberals' 'poverty reduction strategy' will have to be changed to read 'poverty increase' strategy. None of our e-mails [and] telephone calls have been answered by government MPPs."

It's signed, "Donna Bush, media representative, Cangrands."

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VERA SCHIFF

Mr. David Zimmer: I rise today in recognition of my constituent Vera Schiff of Willowdale, who was recognized last week in the 2008 Senior Achievement Awards, this province's highest recognition for seniors.

Vera Schiff is committed to making Ontario the land of opportunity and respect. She has written two books about her experiences during the Holocaust. In sharing

her story, Vera Schiff has demonstrated an extraordinary amount of courage and personal strength. Vera works as a volunteer speaker to teacher candidates across Ontario and indeed across Canada. She has touched thousands of hearts and minds with her message of hope, forgiveness and the ability of one person to make a real difference despite the tragedies of her youth.

I want to congratulate Vera Schiff and thank her for her years of service and contributions across Ontario. Her strength of spirit, grasp of history and courage of conviction is a gift and an example for all of us.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr. Phil McNeely: Tomorrow, Bill 101, the Home Energy Rating Act, will be debated in this Legislature. This legislation is about building better, greener, more efficient new housing and providing more incentives to retrofit our existing homes.

We all know that the hidden cost of home energy use has a major impact on the long-term cost of a home, and realtors tell us that presently there is no mandated, consistent measure to let consumers know what the future energy cost of their homes will be. Bill 101 will change that.

The EnerGuide rating and energy efficiency evaluation report developed by Natural Resources Canada and part of the federal ecoEnergy retrofit program provide the tools for homeowners to invest in reducing the long-term energy costs of owning or renting a home.

The federal and Ontario governments together will provide up to \$10,000 to homeowners who invest in energy efficiency retrofits as suggested by the energy rating of their homes. Paybacks on new home energy efficiency upgrades and on energy retrofits are generally well under 10 years, and savings continue for tens of years into the future.

With the downturn in the economy and the job losses in many communities, the Canadian and Ontario governments should consider a major job creation program in improving the energy efficiency of our housing stock, thereby protecting Ontarians against future energy costs, creating employment, improving air quality and helping our planet.

I invite all members to join me at a luncheon in committee room 2 tomorrow at noon to learn more about this important bill.

CHATHAM-KENT HEALTH ALLIANCE

Mr. Pat Hoy: I'm pleased to inform the House that the Chatham-Kent Health Alliance has been named one of Canada's top 100 employers in a recent Maclean's magazine. It is one of only three hospitals to make the list.

The hospital is the municipality's third-largest employer, with 1,384 staff members. It competed against 2,000 other Canadian employers in eight key areas: physical workplace; work atmosphere; health, financial

and family benefits; vacation and time off; employee communication; performance management; training and skills development; and community involvement. This honour is a testament to the hospital's strong commitment to provide excellence in service.

Thank you to the staff, volunteers and board of directors for their tireless efforts to deliver health care with skill, compassion, and dedication to the people in this community. I congratulate everyone for their contributions in making the Chatham-Kent Health Alliance a great place to work.

The McGuinty government is committed to strengthening our health care system. Our government is working hard to reduce wait times and improve access to health care in our hospitals. We will continue to work with our health care partners to ensure that the people of Chatham-Kent are able to access high-quality care close to home and when they need it.

Again, congratulations to the Chatham-Kent Health Alliance on achieving this outstanding accomplishment.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

EMANCIPATION DAY ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LE JOUR DE L'ÉMANCIPATION

Mr. Arnott moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 111, An Act to proclaim Emancipation Day /
Projet de loi 111, Loi proclamant le Jour de
l'émancipation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Ted Arnott: This bill, if passed by the Legislature, would proclaim August 1 in each year as Emancipation Day in recognition of the abolition of slavery in the British Empire on August 1, 1834.

I believe this is an historic occasion in this Legislature because I believe this is the first bill that is being introduced that is actually co-sponsored by a member from another party, and I want to thank my friend the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex for participating in this process with me.

I also want to recognize in the House and introduce Rosemary Sadler, who is the president of the Ontario Black History Society. Welcome, Rosemary. We'll be working with that organization in support of this bill.

I would urge all MPPs to support this particular piece of legislation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Introduction of bills? Motions? Statements by ministries? Petitions? The member from Newmarket-Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: This petition to the Parliament of Ontario—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I apologize. I didn't—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The acting House leader: Seek unanimous consent.

The Minister of Research and Innovation.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I'd ask for unanimous consent so we may hear a statement by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is there unanimous consent to revert to statements by ministries? Agreed.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CITIZENSHIP WEEK

Hon. Michael Chan: I rise today to recognize Citizenship Week in Canada. In fact, it is an honour and a privilege, as an immigrant to this great country 39 years ago, to now stand before you to speak about the importance of citizenship.

When I took my Canadian citizenship oath, it was one of the most humbling and joyous days in my life. I knew that as a citizen of the greatest country in the world, I would enjoy the many privileges and rights we are so blessed to have, and I vowed to give something back to my new country.

Just yesterday, millions of us had the opportunity to exercise one of the most important and treasured aspects of our citizenship; that is, our right to vote in a democracy.

It wasn't that long ago when Canadians did not have the many privileges citizenship offers. In fact, the first Canadian to become a Canadian citizen was Prime Minister Mackenzie King in 1947. Prior to then, Canadians were merely British subjects living in Canada. Prime Minister King wisely noted, "Without citizenship, much else is meaningless."

Citizenship is the key to opportunity, to rights and to privileges. It is our membership in the community of Canada and Ontario and our neighbourhoods. But it is also about so much more. It's about becoming participating members in our communities. It's about making an individual commitment to keep our province and our country the finest place to live.

Our province is home to people from more than 200 countries who come to Canada to realize their hopes and dreams for a better future. One of these dreams is to become a citizen of this country. In fact, 85% of our immigrants do become Canadian citizens.

As Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, I have the honour of taking part in many citizenship ceremonies. At these ceremonies and throughout my travels, I hear

the stories of so many who give so much to their new country.

One of the most valuable ways citizens contribute is through volunteering. More than five million Ontarians give their time, their skills and their caring to more than 45,000 non-profit organizations across the province. They volunteer with the arts community, sports teams, food banks, service organizations, and the list goes on.

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Their contributions are their commitment as Canadians. They are participating and they are giving. This participation and these contributions enrich our country, our province and each and every one of us. Volunteering is truly citizenship in action. Citizenship is so much more than a handshake and piece of paper. It's a lasting bond with our country. It is our individual and collective commitment to care for our neighbours, share with our communities and work together to make this country an even greater place to live.

This week, let us pause to reflect on what we have to gain and what we have to offer our fellow citizens of Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

CITIZENSHIP WEEK

Mrs. Julia Munro: I welcome the opportunity to respond to the Minister of Citizenship. Citizenship Week in Canada encourages all Canadians to recognize the value of Canadian citizenship. Our citizenship is not just about our status or a card or a piece of paper. It is a statement of the freedoms that all of the people in Canada enjoy—freedoms that Canadians built together over the last 200 years, freedoms passed down to us by our ancestors, freedoms we will pass on to our children and grandchildren.

Every year, thousands of new Canadians join in Canadian citizenship. They are joining a long tradition of freedom, justice and equality. These traditions are what make our citizenship worth something. Newcomers past and present make immense contributions to our province culturally, socially and economically. People coming to our province contribute significantly to all of our communities. They obey our laws, recognize individual freedoms and share the Canadian values of tolerance and understanding.

When an immigrant to Canada becomes a citizen, he or she has to take a test. Here is what they have to study for that test about the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. I think every Canadian should study them. All Canadians have certain rights and responsibilities. They are based on Canadian laws, traditions and shared values. Some of these rights and freedoms are: legal rights, such as the right to a fair trial; equality rights, such as the right to protection against discrimination; mobility rights, such as the right to live and work anywhere in Canada; aboriginal peoples' rights; and basic freedoms, such as freedom of thought, speech, religion and peaceful assembly.

Citizenship also brings responsibility. For example, voting in elections is both a right and a responsibility. All Canadian citizens have the responsibility to vote in elections, to help others in the community, to care for and protect our heritage and environment, to obey Canada's laws, to express opinions freely while respecting the rights and freedoms of others, and to eliminate discrimination and injustice.

Being a Canadian citizen is more than voting and obeying laws. Being a citizen also means getting involved in your community and your country.

CITIZENSHIP WEEK

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to respond to the comments from the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. As I've said before in the House, my parents, who emigrated here from Europe in the wave of immigration in the 1950s, were extraordinarily proud to have become Canadian citizens. My father throughout his life felt that one of the best decisions he'd ever made was to come to this country and become Canadian, and I'm glad, very glad, that they did.

I've been around a number of other countries. I've seen the conditions under which people live. I've seen the restrictions on civil liberties and political rights, and I have to say that we have done many things right here. But I have to say further, and this is important, that in a situation of poverty, of deprivation, of non-recognition of peoples' talents and skills and a lack of opportunity for them to exercise those, those people are deprived of much of what they need to live fully as a citizen in this country. As all the members in this chamber probably have, I've canvassed through many communities, communities where people work two or three jobs, where, when I talk to them about elections, they say that they simply cannot get time off work. They cannot take the time to be away from income-generating activities; they don't have the resources. In practical terms, in order to survive, their rights as citizens, their ability to hold governments to account and put people into office and take people out of office—which is, I think, one of the fundamental powers of a citizen—is compromised. I think, frankly, in this chamber, the fact that we have not put forward and developed a minimum wage that's higher than what people have now means that people are, in practical terms, deprived of much of those rights they have as citizens.

It's very disturbing to me. I'm very concerned when I read reports and, frankly, when I go and talk to my friends in South Asian communities and find more and more that that term "colour of poverty" is one that is real, that there is an increasing correlation between one's complexion and one's colour and one's income. In Toronto, if you look at a map of the city that has been done by demographers, you will see a stratification by income and increasingly a stratification by racial or ethnic background. That disturbs me. No one, based on their national origin, on their cultural origin, should be deprived of

opportunity, should be put in a situation where they would be profiled or discriminated against. So, for me, to fully ensure that people can exercise their rights and responsibilities as citizens, we have to address those issues of poverty and the racialization, the colouring of poverty.

I want to speak briefly to this whole question of volunteering. Every year when the minister makes this speech I make a similar comment back, and that's that although I think volunteering is an extraordinarily good thing to do—I think it's valuable; I think it's needed in society—the simple reality is that in the last 20 years, more and more crucial services that are needed to keep this society functioning have been devolved to volunteers, to charitable groups, to churches.

I talk to many volunteers who work in Out of the Cold programs in churches overnight. If they weren't there, people would literally be sleeping on the street. That doesn't make sense to me. I value what those people do. I think they do it out of the goodness of their heart. I think it makes a difference in this society, but it is wrong that the difference between life and death, between freezing to death and being able to sleep safely and securely for a night, is simply goodwill. In this society, one of the richest on earth, no one should have to sleep in the streets. No one should have to depend on a volunteer to make sure that they can be secure for that one night.

Food banks, when they were introduced, were considered to be a temporary measure, something we'd do for a short while and then we'd get rid of them. They're institutionalized. If you didn't have them, many more people would go hungry.

Volunteering is good, but the downloading of social services onto the backs of volunteers is a backwards step for this society. I ask this government and this minister to look at the social realities that we're encountering and take the steps necessary to ensure that volunteering is something that enriches society and is not something that society has come to depend on as a branch of social services.

PETITIONS

DRINKING AND DRIVING

Mr. Frank Klees: A petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas Tyler Mulcahy and his friends lost their lives in a tragic accident that could have been avoided; and

"Whereas young people must learn zero tolerance for drinking and driving to protect themselves from enduring tragedy that will severely impact them, their families and their friends; and

"Whereas, towards this end, young people need to acquire safe and responsible driving habits from as early an age as possible; and

"Whereas improved provincial driving laws can effectively contribute to the process of enhanced driver training and responsible habits among youth in this respect;

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"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to call on the Ontario Ministry of Transportation to enact laws to revoke the licence of drivers 21 years of age and younger with alcohol in their bloodstream, and to also revoke their licence for speeding, for a period of from three months to one year, based upon the determined amount of alcohol or the level of speed involved."

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Kim Craitor: I'm pleased to introduce this petition, given to me by the Grandparents Requesting Access and Dignity Society. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents, as requested in Bill 33 put forward by MPP Kim Craitor.

"Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant's willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents."

I'm pleased to sign my signature in support of this and present it to page Sarah to give to the table.

SEXUAL REASSIGNMENT SURGERY

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition that reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the previous Progressive Conservative government determined sex-change operations were not a

medical spending priority and instead chose to invest in essential health care services; and

"Whereas Premier McGuinty said in 2004 that funding for sex-change operations was not a priority of his government; and

"Whereas the current Liberal government has eliminated and reduced OHIP coverage for chiropractic, optometry and physiotherapy services; and

"Whereas the present shortage of doctors and nurses, troubling waiting times for emergency services and other treatment, operational challenges at many hospitals, as well as a crisis in our long-term-care homes, signify the current government has not met their health care commitments;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario does not fund sex-change operations under OHIP and instead concentrates its priorities on essential health services and directs our health care resources to improve patient care for Ontarians."

I affix my name in support.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the skyrocketing price of gasoline is causing hardship to families across Ontario; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government charges a gasoline tax of 14.7 cents per litre to drivers in all parts of Ontario; and

"Whereas gasoline tax revenues now go exclusively to big cities with transit systems, while roads and bridges crumble in other communities across Ontario"—communities like mine—"and;

"Whereas whatever one-time money has flowed to municipalities from the McGuinty Liberal government has been neither stable nor predictable and has been insufficient to meet our infrastructure needs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to redistribute provincial gasoline tax revenues fairly to all communities across the province."

I am pleased to sign and support this petition and present it to Connor, one of the new pages.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's my pleasure to present this petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It has been signed by patients of a number of family physicians in western Mississauga. It reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital

project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

It's an excellent petition. I'm pleased to sign and support it and to ask page Lauren to carry it for me.

CAMBRIDGE COURTHOUSE

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition, signed by hundreds of good citizens of Cambridge, to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, headed "Keep Cambridge Courthouse Open.

"Whereas the McGuinty government plans to close the Cambridge courthouse; and

"Whereas the closing of the Cambridge courthouse could hurt the Galt core, which goes against government objectives to encourage development in the core area; and

"Whereas Cambridge law firms may end up moving to Kitchener as a result; and

"Whereas Cambridge is the second-largest municipality in the regional municipality of Waterloo (and similar in size to many other Ontario cities such as Barrie, Brantford, Guelph, Kingston, Peterborough, St. Catharines, Sarnia, Sudbury etc.), which continues to grow at a rapid rate; and

"Whereas a larger facility with all regional courthouses under one roof could result in higher operating costs;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the government of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government ensure the Cambridge courthouse remain open whether or not a new courthouse is constructed in Kitchener."

As I agree with the contents of this petition, I affix my name thereto.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's a pleasure to read this petition from some good people here in Niagara Falls. It is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and reads as follows:

"We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents, as requested in Bill 33, put forward by" the member from Niagara Falls; and

"Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant's willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents."

I am pleased to sign this petition and to ask page Timothy to carry it for me.

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DRINKING AND DRIVING

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly which reads as follows:

"Whereas Tyler Mulcahy and his friends lost their lives in a tragic motor vehicle accident that could have been avoided; and

"Whereas young people must learn zero tolerance for drinking and driving to protect themselves from enduring tragedy that will severely impact them, their families and their friends; and

"Whereas, towards this end, young people need to acquire safe and responsible driving habits from as early an age as possible; and

"Whereas improved provincial driving laws can effectively contribute to the process of enhanced driver training and responsible habits among youth in this respect;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to call on the Ontario Ministry of Transportation to enact laws to revoke the licence of drivers 21 years of age and younger with alcohol in their bloodstream, and to also revoke their licence for speeding, for a period of from three months to one year, based

on the determined amount of alcohol or the level of speed involved."

I'm pleased to sign this in support, that this should never happen to one of our children, and present it to Connor on his last day here at the Legislature.

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. Kim Craitor: I'm pleased to stand again and present the following petition to the House.

"Petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas the legacy of Pope John Paul II reflects his lifelong commitment to international understanding, peace and the defence of equality and human rights;

"Whereas his legacy has an all-embracing meaning that is particularly relevant to Canada's multi-faith and multicultural traditions;

"Whereas, as one of the great spiritual leaders of contemporary times, Pope John Paul II visited Ontario during his pontificate of more than 25 years and, on his visits, was enthusiastically greeted by Ontario's diverse religious and cultural communities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to grant speedy passage into law of the private member's bill by the member from Newmarket-Aurora entitled An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day in Ontario."

I'm pleased to sign this petition in support of it.

SEXUAL REASSIGNMENT SURGERY

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the previous Progressive Conservative government determined sex-change operations were not a medical spending priority and instead chose to invest in essential health care services; and

"Whereas Premier McGuinty said in 2004 that funding for sex-change operations was not a priority of his government; and

"Whereas the current Liberal government has eliminated and reduced OHIP coverage for chiropractic, optometry and physiotherapy services; and

"Whereas the present shortage of doctors and nurses, troubling wait times for emergency services and other treatment, operational challenges at many hospitals, as well as a crisis in our long-term-care homes, signify the current government has not met their health care commitments;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario does not fund sex-change operations under OHIP and instead concentrates its priorities on essential health services and directs our health care resources to improve patient care for Ontarians."

As I agree with this petition, I affix my name thereto.

GTA POOLING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition signed by a number of people from Forestwood Drive in Mississauga–Streetsville as well as Parkerhill Road in Cooksville. It is a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It's entitled "End GTA Pooling" and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the city of Mississauga faces a long-term labour shortage, resulting in some 60,000 more people commuting into the city of Mississauga than leave Mississauga to earn their living and support their families each and every day; and

"Whereas 10 years ago the Ontario government of that day introduced the concept of GTA pooling, whereby funds are taken from the municipalities surrounding the city of Toronto and channelled into the city of Toronto without benefit or accountability to the taxpayers of those fast-growing cities, which face big-city needs and issues of their own; and

"Whereas GTA pooling places an additional tax burden on the municipal property tax bases of some \$40 million each and every year to the city of Mississauga; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario in its 2007-08 budget proposes to completely eliminate GTA pooling during a seven-year span beginning in fiscal year 2007-08, and that, as pooling is phased out, Ontario will take responsibility for social assistance and social housing costs currently funded by GTA pooling;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all parties within the government of Ontario support the ... provisions ending GTA pooling"

It's an excellent petition. I'm pleased to sign and support it and to ask page Matthew to carry it for me.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for petitions has ended.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 9, 2008, on the amendment to the amendment to the motion by Mr. McGuinty to acknowledge the economic challenges facing the province and continuing to implement an economic plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I'm very pleased to be here to speak to the resolution that the Premier tabled in the House the other day.

I read with interest some of the comments. Having been on a trip representing Ontario while the debate started, I was very interested to see what some of our colleagues in this House had to say. So I wanted the opportunity to share with the House and the people of Ontario some of the initiatives that our government is taking—

especially important in the face of the economic challenges that we face here in Ontario.

The very makeup of our economy, the fact that we are 40% of the GDP of the nation, the fact that 20% of our GDP, in fact, is manufacturing, so when our manufacturing sector feels some kind of constraint, whether that be the oil prices, the challenge of the US sales market—all of those things mean that Ontario will feel that harder than any province in the country, which is especially why we now beseech the new government—the same old, perhaps some might say, government in Ottawa—to pay special attention to Ontario, to say, "Ontario, in fact, drives the national economy." They too, in the scope of the last few weeks, have had to realize what an impact Ontario has on the nation, what an impact the US economy has on the world, with every part of the world having to respond to what was going on in the US economy these last couple of weeks. No matter where I was, representing Ontario, I could see and hear and feel the impact of the US economy around the world. So imagine a jurisdiction like Ontario, 87% of whose market is exported to that very US market that is undergoing fundamental change right now—and we are holding our own.

I want to talk about our plan and why international trade is so vital to Ontario, that our history is, in fact, being an export jurisdiction. I worry when I hear some of the commentary around Buy Ontario, Buy Canada. All I can say is, no matter where we are in the world, imagine if the rest of the world was to take a position of buying only their own product. Where would that leave Ontario, whose very fundamental is built around the fact that we are an export jurisdiction?

It was very clear that in the Premier's response to our economic challenges and in the very development of a ministry to heighten awareness around international trade and investment—he created a ministry especially to do just that. I'm proud as the minister to go out and speak about Ontario and talk about Ontario's strengths.

I just want to give you some examples of what we've been doing as a government over the course of these last five years. We've created 10 new international marketing centres and put those 10 in vital areas around the world.

If we start with Europe, where the euro is quite strong by comparison to North American currency now, they, worried about their own economies, start looking outside and say, "How can we get into the North American economy?" We say, "We believe that Ontario can be your portal." We believe that Ontario, given our kind of economy and our kind of people, actually makes Europeans feel the most comfortable in doing business. They can come in via Ontario and access an economy of \$440 million in North America. That's our message to Europe, the result of which is opening an office of this ministry in London, England; in Paris, France, which we just did this past summer to a tremendous response, where the French were saying, "Wow, nous avons des francophones en Ontario aussi. Il n'y a pas de francophones seulement au Québec."

I practised really hard for that speech at the chamber of commerce in Paris to make the point that there's lots of room for French companies to come into Ontario, and they agreed, and we're so pleased to be getting such a positive response from them. We have an office in Munich, Germany, at the heart of some of the most exciting changes in alternative energies and company growth, where we want to latch onto that and link that to our green economy. So, three significant offices in Europe.

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If we move to south Asia, where we know there is growth and we're feeling some of that intense competition in manufacturing, we have an office in New Delhi linking us—not just companies, but educational institutions as well—to find opportunities in India, because we know it's there. We know it's growing and we want to be a part of that.

We've got two offices now in China. We can't fear China; we can't ignore China. We have to jump in there and find the opportunities that exist in China. To that end, I've just opened the second office there. The first one is in Shanghai, a vibrant, booming office doing a tremendous amount of work on our behalf, these days preparing for the Premier's journey to China, where he's bringing environmental technology companies with him. This will be his second trade mission there in his term as Premier. The second one is in Beijing, where in some cultures like the Chinese culture, government-to-government representation actually matters. Some of the companies that we deal with in China, in fact, are state companies, so the relationship between ministers and between governments really matters. So an office in Beijing, their country's capital, is vital to continuing those relationships and making them understand that we want to do business with China. They want to learn from our technologies which, frankly, are the best in the world.

If we swing through the Americas, what's important to us? Our financial services sector, for example, linked—third largest in North America—ICT. What do we have to link to? Where the big bold sectors are in North America. We have a New York office to link us with financial services there. In Los Angeles, again, close to that whole swooping west coast, a huge ICT sector, where we have to link into that market—and two more offices there.

Where are we doing an abundant business in our car manufacturing base, the very heartland of Ontario's manufacturing sector? In Japan. We have an office in Tokyo, where we've begun that relationship, many years now, but that has landed us that second Toyota plant in Woodstock. How proud we are that that's coming with the hundreds and hundreds of jobs that that will bring, because we could maintain a relationship, again, with a culture where the ministerial leadership and governmental relationships really matter.

I think it's fair to say that that's not the case in every government, in every part of the world and in every culture, but it is in some. So government recognizes

when they've got to take leadership and bring our Ontario companies with us.

The Middle East may be just one such region where it's important that the Ontario government open the door and get our companies in there for opportunities that frankly, let me say colloquially, would blow your mind in terms of what they're looking to do in their own markets and what they want to do with money to invest and diversify in our markets.

Why I chose to make notes is beyond me, because we can talk for a long time about the opportunities.

There are two areas of interest for the Ministry of International Trade and Investment. One is looking for those international companies to come in and invest in Ontario, and the second is bringing our Ontario companies that are export-oriented, or not, and make them export-oriented and get them out to all kinds of new markets around the world, because that means jobs in Ontario. That's our focus. It's that simple. Two things: companies out there coming to Ontario; Ontario companies getting out to the world. That's the job of the Ministry of International Trade. It could never be more important than now, when we recognize that there may not be as many opportunities right now in this fiscal year, say, in North America as there are abroad. We've got to extend our focus and our range. We've got to help our companies get out there and look at places they never would have gone on their own, perhaps.

Hence this trip to the Middle East this past week, where we brought 20 companies to participate in the Cityscape Dubai show, the focus of which is development. Our Ontario companies were so proud to understand that in some of these instances, the only reason that our companies employ people in Ontario is because of the business that they do in the Middle East. It's a phenomenal story. It's a story of people who had the nerve to get out there, really ahead of the curve. There's a glass company in Guelph that employs over 300 people, whose whole job is based on the fact that they are selling beautiful glass for these magnificent buildings in Dubai, in Abu Dhabi, all over the Middle East. So if you walk into these grand foyers of these hotel lobbies and you see this artistic décor of glass, that's our glass made in Guelph, Ontario. Can you imagine? There's a place called Crystal Fountains. It's a company based here in Toronto. Again, in the Middle East, there they were in this show. They are employing people in Ontario, but all of their business is outside.

These magnificent builds that are going on around the world are finding our companies in Ontario and saying, "We want yours because it is world-renowned."

There is an engineering firm—I need to give them a plug, I was so impressed with them; hang on now—RWDI.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Also Guelph.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: This is a Guelph company, says the MPP from Guelph. Yes, it was. I was very impressed with them. The Dubai Cityscape show has models to beat the band, models beyond description of

the most magnificent dreams that people will actually build at some point. But RWDI have a niche product that they sell. They're an engineering-based company. They employ tens upon tens of people here in Ontario, but all of their business is overseas. They are the specialists for wind engineering for skyscrapers. So all of these magnificent skyscrapers—and we've got a few in Canada, but not that many compared to other parts of the world—call RWDI because they are the best in the business. They figure out where the holes have to go in the skyscraper so that these things are going to be very, very stable when they go up a kilometre in the air. Imagine: I had the opportunity in a helicopter to see this kilometre-high building. Now, of course we only got up to halfway and the building went up another half overhead and it wasn't quite done yet. It was a phenomenal story.

A fellow named Jim Metcalfe has been in Abu Dhabi for 40 years, and he employs people in Ontario. His is an engineering firm with an expertise that is well known throughout the Middle East.

People employed in Ontario are known around the world in many, many places, with this level of expertise. If you want proper architecture, design and builds engineering, come to Ontario.

This speaks to a part of the resolution that the Premier tabled. He said, "What do we have to invest in for our future? Education." What is our selling feature about Ontario? In all of the OECD countries, there's not a jurisdiction that has a higher level of educated workforce than Ontario. That's because of our investments and that's because in our Ministry of Education we start with the little ones. I can go around the world and say that there's nowhere in the world with a law that says that when your child is in the primary grades it's against the law to have a class of more than 20 kids. How impressive is that? When these companies come to build a plant in our jurisdiction, they know that in 20 years they will still have the best-educated workforce in the world. That's what they're going to find in Ontario. What an exciting story that is to tell.

When I go and meet companies that are out there and are looking for where they are going to invest—let me tell you a little story about Capcom. Capcom is a digital gaming company based out of Tokyo. The digital gaming sector is a booming sector within the information technology sector—they're saying, over the course of the next four years, a \$50-billion industry. Off we went to their headquarters to sit down and say, "How can we get you to expand your base in Ontario?" She said to me, "You don't need to convince me. You in Ontario are the only place that I can find the kind of people I need to hire. They come out of your education system with art, with music, with computer science"—with that kind of skill set, where they learn math by music in many instances. They've got that right combination for that sector.

What's happened since then? Since we were there to meet with Capcom, they've invested and expanded their footprint in Ontario. We're proud of that kind of story.

Aditya Birla is a great Indian company with a multitude of departments within that company. Aditya Birla has, since we've met repeatedly with them, again expanded their footprint in Ontario. So we have to go and maintain good relationships with Aditya Birla, to find out where they're going and how that can be applicable to Ontario.

Denso, one of the suppliers to Toyota: How is it now that we've got some 13 suppliers who have also landed their footprint around Toyota? Because we are reaching out to them and saying, "Come to Ontario."

We also have the opportunity to incent them to come, whether that's through our advanced manufacturing investment strategy or the Next Generation of Jobs Fund. Why do we know that's important? Because we know that every other jurisdiction is trying to cut our grass on this front, and we have to be first and foremost in their minds. It's more than just the money when you come to Ontario. We have far more than that to offer in a number of sectors.

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When we have concerns, we see huge changes in the steel sector, very relevant to the Hamilton area, for example, or Algoma Steel up in the Soo. So we go and meet with these new owners whose headquarters are far-flung from us, and yet they need to know about us. We need to know that they care about their footprint in Ontario, and how we can entice them to make more investments, and make the investment that they currently have in Ontario secure. That's a significant part of this job, and we have done that.

At the same time, imagine the terrible job to have to go and visit Ferrero, the famous chocolate company in Italy—

Hon. John Wilkinson: Someone has to do it.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Somebody has to do that job. Well, let me tell you that their headquarters footprint is almost as nice as the one in Brantford, Ontario. A Brantford, Ontario, investment by Ferrero in Italy is one of their best footprints around the world. How impressive to have an opportunity to speak to them about what else they can do in Brantford, and that was the chance that I had. Imagine getting out of the car, and you are overwhelmed by this smell of hazelnut and chocolate. It's fabulous. Anyway, it was as wonderful as their Brantford site.

Let me talk for a minute about Ontario companies, how well we're doing around the world and why we need to be so proud of them. We've led a number of companies to the aerospace show in Farnborough, England. It's one of the largest aerospace shows in the world. We have 30% of Canada's aerospace industry right here in Ontario, one big assembler—of course, we all know Bombardier—but we also have the huge benefit of suppliers to aerospace. Did you know that 70% of all the landing gear in the world comes from Ontario—Messier-Dowty, Goodrich—and that Goodrich has a testing facility that is the biggest in the world, right here in Ontario? We're proud of that. That means they sell their

product to everybody. Whether it's Embraer or Airbus, through EADS, all of those great companies rely on Ontario supply companies. That's why we have to continue to be international in scope.

I know we've joked in this House about ball bearings before, but there's an important story behind ball bearings. The people from Stratford will know this. FAG Aerospace makes the best ball bearings in the world. That may mean nothing to those of us in this House, but if you're flying that engine on that plane, you want to know that you have a Stratford-built FAG Aerospace ball bearing in that engine because it is precise within a hair's breadth. That's how precise it is. And we're thrilled to see that because we've been able to incent and they care about Ontario, they've made an additional investment in Ontario to grow their facility in Stratford. They sell that product all over the world, and it's very impressive.

A really neat little story, and I know all of you know the movie *Titanic*: There's that one scene where Leonardo and Kate—of course, I focus on Leonardo—are at the bow of the ship, with their arms extended. That shot is a famous shot for the movie *Titanic*. The way they took that shot for this film was that the camera was in a helicopter, swooping around the ship. The only reason they're able to take that film, and it's so precise and it doesn't move, is because of a great innovation of technology by L-3 Communications, right here in Ontario. And that kind of technology is not just for Hollywood; it's for defence, it's for the airline industry, it's for aerospace, and that was created right here in Ontario. Of course, I think that's a great story, because who knew we've got such a hand in that great scene from the *Titanic*, that that would be a great Ontario company?

Let me just finish by saying that we have a number of things we have to be proud of, that this is the Ontario story that we take abroad. We talk about our great cars. Do you know, I met a guy in Saudi Arabia who is the largest Crown Vic salesperson in world—the Speaker of the House will appreciate this, because the Speaker comes from St. Thomas: 6,000 cars a year, and he can't get enough. So I've got to call our Ford execs and get them to ship him more Crown Vics, because they love our cars. The truth is that we make 2.5 million cars in Ontario, 85% of which are exported—another great example of being an export jurisdiction. We can't just shut our doors. We need to burst them open and get out there on the world scene to tell them the great facts of Ontario.

I'm just proud to be a part of a government that lets us do this, that lets us boast, with rights, about a great education system, about great incentives, about the best apprenticeship tax credit worldwide, bar none—that's what you get in Ontario—a digital media tax credit that gets better and better, enticing those new companies from those new sectors to come and invest in Ontario. All I have to say to the people in the House is, be proud and get out there and tell the Ontario story.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I just want to go over the wording:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario acknowledges our province faces economic challenges created by the high dollar, high international oil prices, the US economic slowdown, international economic turmoil, and increased global manufacturing competition from China and India ...;

"That just as Ontario families do when finances get tight at home, the Ontario government should make adjustments as necessary to its finances while protecting our shared priorities, such as health care, education, the environment and public safety;

"That the investments made over the last five years in vital public services and Ontarians' key priorities like skills training, infrastructure, education, and health care will help Ontario weather the economic challenges in the short term and emerge stronger than ever;

"And affirms our strongest possible support for Ontario workers and families and for a healthy, growing economy by continuing to implement the five-point economic plan that includes: investing in the skills of our people, making targeted tax cuts, investing in research and innovation, investing in infrastructure, and partnering with businesses, while also expanding trade ties within Canada and internationally and seeking fairness from the federal government for Ontarians."

Part of the reason I read that was because I want to debate some of the content in there and talk about some of the specific issues. I think the reason it was brought forward, as it was in the House, is that in the past number of weeks we've had a federal election and the current provincial government is essentially doing a lot of what Danny Williams did, and that's the ABC aspect of what took place there. I think what Newfoundland is going to experience is that they'll probably get the ABC, and when any announcements are made, there will be "anything but Conservatives" making announcements in Newfoundland.

Part of what I find concerning here is that if you want to reach out with an olive branch to the federal government, working together in an honest and fair way rather than slamming them for this and blaming them for infrastructure and problems areas that happen in the province of Ontario—Ontario has always been sort of the big brother aspect within the family in helping out the rest of the country and always was there to contribute its fair share throughout the country.

But each government comes along and we need more money. Quite frankly, we've targeted some of that money. A lot of members here would have been out there door-knocking in the fashion that I was in the past couple of weeks. One of the key things was seniors: How are we going to keep seniors in their homes? At AMO they announced the transfer of funds to municipalities, who weren't expecting it—one-time funding. Is it potentially some tax freeze that could help out, and what could take place in developing the economy and keeping seniors in their homes?

I know, Mr. Speaker, you were probably out during the federal election and getting some input or supporting an individual or areas, as most members do; that's part of finding out from our constituents what the key issues are at that time. Most of the time people don't realize that when we're in this—they always say, "The only time we see you is during an election." The reality is, any politicians who are working, doing their jobs, are in here, are at events and things like that, and it's seven days a week. So we find out these things and there's a huge concern.

I can remember buying apples at Algoma Orchards—I don't know if you've tried the honeycrisp, but they're certainly something to try. A senior came up to me and said, "What are you going to do to help us stay in our house? What exactly is taking place that will allow me to stay in our house right now? We've got an assessment increase of 20%. How is that going to affect an individual on a fixed income?" So this transfer of funds could have been played out to keep people in their municipalities.

I spoke with my local mayor, who wasn't going to invest it in infrastructure because what happens is that all of a sudden there's a huge influx with a limited number and it's supply and demand. So all of a sudden there is a huge demand. Well, the cost of supply goes up, so building infrastructure with roads increases the price of that, and there's not a big turnover, as I say, or investment—the best value for the dollar.

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I think something that we, as individuals, need to realize is that government's job, in my opinion, is to create an environment where businesses can flourish and individuals can raise a family and grow, and still finding those balancing points with our environment, where we can have a healthy environment to live and grow.

Quite frankly, I can recall in previous days when the question—obviously, the big issue at General Motors is what's happening with General Motors and the automotive sector, and it's not quite the rosy picture painted by the previous speaker—used to be, "Do I have to work another Sunday?" They were working seven days a week, and the area of concern was, "Why would I want to work overtime?" The comments that used to come back were, "Why would I work another day when the tax that I pay is going to increase? It's not worth my while." So what we did when we had the opportunity to govern the province is, we decreased that tax in order to give an incentive for people to work. Hence, the company was going seven days a week, people were working seven days a week, and there was more incentive for those individuals to keep their funds to spend back into the economy. What this government has done is they've taken the taxes in and given them back to the municipalities in the hope that they're going to stimulate some actual growth or expenditures within the municipality to help the economy.

The other aspect of that is, when you're working on the line at General Motors or when you're at the management level, if you have one individual who's willing to put in the extra hours, you're not hiring another in-

dividual, so that you have the pension issue that comes forward, as well as the benefits and everything else that goes on with hiring an individual. So it's an incentive for businesses and individuals to work in our community by reducing the taxes and allowing them to go forward. Even the motion here talked about decreasing taxes and how they are going to target that. One of the ways might be to give incentives for businesses located here. So if there's an incentive to work more, you don't have to hire as many employees, with less required expenditures in the health and benefits and the pension aspect.

The previous speaker spoke about all the great work in China and India and how they're opening new shops there, yet in the statement here it talks about the competition coming forward from the Chinese community and China and India and the impact it's having here. Part of it is that we, as Ontarians, really want it all in a lot of cases.

As I mentioned last week, I was talking about going out and buying a new set of hockey pants for my son. He wanted a particular brand: Fury. I said, "No, you're not getting Fury." He said, "Why not, Dad? They're good pants." And I said, "They may be good pants, but I have some problems with the fact that they're made in China. We're actually going to buy Tackla pants, which are made in Canada, made in Pickering, and support Canadian workers in that area." If we look at those things and how we can best support our workers around here, it'll have a big impact.

Some of the other stuff I want to talk about on this is the high international oil prices. I have a little bit of a different slant on what took place. Back in 1978, I happened to be with individuals who were in the company of people who were building the first all-steel construction building in the Middle East, and they happened to be given the opportunity to meet with the chair of OPEC. At that time, they said, "The chair would like to meet with you and discuss this issue," because this was brand new technology to them. "You'll be allowed to ask one question, whatever you want, and they will answer the question, but don't ask any more than that because that's it." So he asked, in 1978, "Why did you increase the price of oil from \$5 or \$7 in 1974 to \$50 a barrel?" It was tenfold. The chair of OPEC looked at him and said, "Look, I make \$95 million a day"—1978 dollars. "Do you think I can spend \$95 million a day? Do you think I care if I make \$500 million a day?" The reality was that the US economy came to them and said, "If you want western technology in the Middle East, you'd better have oil at a price that workers in the United States can compete with." So they increased the price of oil so that the workers in the United States could compete with theirs, or so I was told at that time.

Let's get to what's taking place right now with the price of oil. About a year ago, as the price started to increase, I said that Bush was doing the same thing with oil that Carter did with peanuts. If you talk to Mr. Barrett, he'll certainly tell you—and I know you've got a lot of tobacco farmers down there—that the growing conditions

for peanuts are very similar to those for tobacco. When there was a suggestion to convert over to peanuts, it was hard to get into that market because President Carter, when he was in, protected the peanut market and disallowed other markets from coming in, the point being that Bush, in my opinion, was doing that for the oil sector. I said, "You watch"—this was a year ago that I said this, as the price started to increase—"what will happen when they allow offshore drilling. There will be enough pressure on there so that the oil sector, which is disallowed from offshore drilling in the United States any longer"—within two weeks of an announcement of offshore drilling being allowed, going through the Senate, and it having the support to make it happen, the price of oil started to come down.

Now, it's a double-edged sword when you talk about that in economies and the impact on economies. We certainly saw it all around.

I happened to speak to a former vice-president of British Petroleum who was in Ontario, and I asked him about this situation in 1978. He said, "Absolutely." He said, "If that price of oil had not increased, England would never have found the deep-sea crude deposits." That's how they were able to get the financing to find those deposits. So we're seeing some of the games that are being played, in my opinion, and the impact on economies and everything else. You watch, Mr. Speaker: I fully expect that the price of oil will come down now that offshore drilling is being allowed and part of the issues in the US election are being taken care of as part of the economic stimulus. I think we'll see some more individuals.

Some of the other areas, coming from Oshawa, and the impact: We're losing the truck plant, and they're an award-winning plant. I know that in Peterborough, for example, General Motors is still one of the largest employers, if not the largest.

Interjection.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: It's number two now? It's the second-largest employer in Peterborough, and the impact of what happens with the truck plant takes place.

Now, there is the direct impact on the jobs and what happens with the individuals in the spinoff support sectors that surround it. But what happens with the municipality's tax base with that plant that was contributing over \$1 million annually to the taxes in the city of Oshawa? Where is the expectation going to go? It's going to fall, lo and behold, on the residential component once again in order to maintain that standard that's currently in the city of Oshawa. So individuals can expect taxes to go up.

Let's continue on with that, Mr. Speaker. We had a very wet summer. There weren't too many people watering their lawns out there, so I expect the region is going to come forward and say, "Hey, we didn't get enough people using enough water this summer, so we're going to have to increase the rates in order to cover the cost of operating the water plants and facilities out there." You're going to see some increased rates, an increased cost of living for water. You're going to see increased

taxation in order to cover the costs for the lost businesses in our community. Lo and behold, we're back to seniors again, and what are we doing to help them?

If we look at some of the other ways that we can try to come forward and assist that community, I know that in the spring, when they announced the closure of the truck plant, in May and June—and I had brought forward a number of pieces of legislation because I could kind of see some things on the wall. There were some concerning areas in Oshawa that made me want to deal with this issue. It goes right back to 1996, when I first started talking about the Stevenson Road interchange in our community, which was supposed to help the truck plant, the new car plant and the new paint shop that they were going to start building. There was a \$1.5-billion paint shop that I received information on when I started working on the interchange aspect. "Well, why are you locating the paint shop here? Isn't it going to be hard to get the trucks up here to paint them?" At that time I was told, "Oh, no, no. The paint shop isn't going to handle any trucks." I'd already been told that it was only going to handle 60% of what was coming out of the car plant, so it started to make me wonder and the flags started to go up about where the problems might be and what we can do and try to help out with.

But it's the spinoff effect, the community that's affected by this, and at that time, in the spring, I made an offer to the Premier to look at using the structure of the alternative fuels committee, an all-party committee where there was equal representation—I think at that time they had five government members, three opposition and two third-party, and the Chair was a government member as well—to look at economic stimulus in the manufacturing sector, what we could do, and to try to bring this forward. I still think that would be a way to go, to try to bring everybody together, because we're all concerned about this. There isn't one side of the House more concerned than the other. It's just a way that we can try to address this issue and find out what we can from the business sector as to what they think can help, and we can all sit down and discuss it. I know the alternative fuels committee is still having a significant impact on what's taking place.

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But some of the other things that can help out: I've also brought forward some discussions on—we talk about being environmentally friendly, as mentioned in this motion, the environmental aspect. Every vehicle that comes out of the car plants in the Big Three is E85 friendly, which means it can run on 85% ethanol. Yet, as everyone knows here, there are only four locations in Ontario where you can refuel those vehicles. Is that an incentive or a disincentive?

Once the current government started—and I don't usually like to banter back and forth and blame somebody—taxing ethanol, it was a further disincentive for ethanol to be used as a fuel source. There's a big controversy in Oshawa about an ethanol plant going in down at the harbour. As I said before, there's so much con-

trovercy over ethanol. I think the plan should move ahead, but I'm not necessarily sure that the harbour is the place to go.

Ethanol would allow for the vehicles and the distribution—for competition to the oil sector. So if we're concerned enough to put the fact that—it states right in here—the cost of a barrel of oil is impacting the economy, wouldn't it be a good government incentive to find alternative ways to bring in competition so that there are incentives for the oil companies, if need be, to reduce the cost of oil so that the other infrastructures and the other development of that can move forward?

The other aspect of that is, in order to move to the second phase of the ethanol development, they have something called cellulite-based ethanol, which means, effectively, they can take any carbon-based material and convert it to ethanol. But they need the base infrastructure in order to move to the second level of the technology, to get it right so it can be cost-effective. We need those infrastructure things in place so that we can provide the fuel and provide incentive for new competitive areas.

As I mentioned in the House to the minister standing now, in the US jurisdictions there were a number of locations where they used independents or non-primary fuel providers, because we certainly know that the major oil companies have no interest in providing a competitor or a competitive product for them in their own stations. However, if they had some of the independents starting to sell it, they would think twice about it. There are some companies down in the States that found tax incentives to convert non-utilized or primary tanks over to an ethanol-based tank so it could be used for distribution. That had a number of effects.

We hear about the impact on the cost of corn around the world, yet when I speak to the automotive manufacturers, they tell me that 85% of the corn currently produced is not for human consumption already and that the other—it's only 15%. The impact would be minimal, according to them, based on the human consumption aspect, whereas it's an incentive for production for farmers and it's an incentive for new technologies. There's the switchgrass technology that the alternative fuels committee came forward with that was being used for pelletization and for a number of aspects and development. The Ministry of Natural Resources is talking about using biomass in cogen plants and aspects like that. Effectively what that is is, you take all the leaves and the branches and the bark that's not used from the tree and take it out of the forest and use it to fuel cogen plants. It sounds great, but eventually they're going to figure out that once they remove all the biomass there's nothing there to break down as fertilizer for the future forests to grow in the province of Ontario. For those who don't realize it, there is a no-fertilization policy in any of the crown lands.

Those are some of the areas that need to be addressed and how we can develop them. I've been focusing on the auto sector because that's where I'm from—Oshawa—which is very key. Fortunately, we've had some diver-

sities in our community and our job structure, whether it's the cancer centre, the university, the courthouse or many other things. But still the auto sector and what takes place there—it used to be the number one economic engine in the province of Ontario, and I think it still can be if we develop the infrastructure and a supportive government position through tax incentives, through incentives for individuals to work and, as mentioned right in there, targeted tax incentives. And we need to make sure we can keep our seniors in their homes, because quite frankly Ontario is a great place to grow, to live and raise a family, as all of us have chosen here. I just think that with a little bit of work and a little bit of time we can make it that much better. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I just asked for some water. I wasn't giving the peace sign, but asking for some water.

I have to say that it was a eureka moment when the government finally put a motion forward acknowledging that there was a problem with Ontario's economy. It was a eureka moment because they were late coming to the party. We have watched thousands and thousands and hundreds of thousands of jobs leave this province, and those families that were hit by those job losses over the last couple of years—the last several years—have known very well that Ontario has had an economic crisis looming. In fact, they have been living and breathing—in a very reduced standard of living, I must say—the economic crisis that this government has more or less ignored for the last couple of years.

The resolution that we are debating, that was, I believe, tabled just last week, finally was an acknowledgment by the McGuinty Liberals that in fact there is a threat of recession in Ontario. In fact, last December, after a couple of hundred thousand jobs had already left the province of Ontario—

Interjection.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you. What's your name?

Interjection.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Sarah. Sorry; your collar, your frill, is covering your name. That was page Sarah, who just brought me a couple of glasses of water to get me through this next 20 minutes.

As I was saying, last December, when the finance minister was delivering the economic statement, he said in his speech—and this is only last December; it's not even a year ago—"The fundamentals of our economy are vital and strong." Well, holy smokes, no worker in Hamilton who had been laid off prior to last December would agree that those fundamentals of the economy were vital and strong.

Last spring, when the asset-backed commercial paper mess was starting to unravel and bank economists were lowering their expectations, our finance minister says—this is on March 18, 2008—"The economy is fundamentally strong and resilient." Well, unfortunately, the

McGuinty government for too long chose to ignore the looming problems on the horizon and instead used words like “resilient” and “fundamentally strong” to get around bringing the real debate to this Legislature about the mess we were in and what we needed to do to reverse the course. And unfortunately, because they took such a long time to get around to acknowledging and realizing the suffering of families in one community after another across this province, because they waited so long, we now have said goodbye to hundreds of thousands of jobs in the province of Ontario while they stood by without making any comment or any remark.

Now we stand debating a resolution that really does nothing at all except acknowledge finally that there's a crisis happening in the province of Ontario. They could have brought all kinds of things forward for us to discuss and debate, but no; instead of reversing the trend as it was rolling along over the last several years, we are now, after waving goodbye to those good-paying manufacturing jobs, those good forestry and resource jobs, at a position of debating a resolution that really does very little indeed.

We have watched manufacturing and resource sector workers in the province as they've lost their jobs, as they've lived the recession that's been upon us for several years. They know that the economies in their communities have not been, for a very long time—one of those communities is my community, and we have known that the economy has not been fundamentally strong. We have watched good jobs leave and we have watched bad jobs replace them, and we have watched poverty rates go through the roof in the city of Hamilton. And I know, having spoken to people all across this province over the last several months, that the same trends have been hitting community after community after community for the last couple of years.

I have to wonder: If I know it and I'm the MPP for my community, where were all of those other MPPs when the same kinds of tragedies were hitting their communities in terms of job losses and in terms of lack of decent jobs to replace those job losses? I don't know, but at least here we are four years later, hundreds of thousands of lost jobs later, and finally we have a resolution in front of us, although it's really a do-nothing resolution.

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But nonetheless, the job crisis in Ontario's manufacturing and forestry heartlands has been significant. Since July 2004, almost 230,000 Ontario jobs in the manufacturing sector are gone—gone, 230,000 jobs. Those are jobs that sustained a decent quality of life for families. Those are jobs where benefits were paid, where pensions were guaranteed for people; jobs where you could actually maintain a household, pay a mortgage, maybe put a little bit aside for the education of your children because, of course, the cost of education in this province is something that very, very few families can afford. You have to put a little bit away, but you can't put a little bit away anymore, not if you're one of those 230,000 families whose manufacturing job walked out of this province over the last four years.

Where were those jobs? As I mentioned, they're in communities all over the province:

—430 jobs, 80% of its workforce, at DDM Plastics in Tillsonburg;

—in Niagara region last month, 800 jobs lost at John Deere in Welland, and a temporary layoff as well in that community of 480 workers at AbitibiBowater;

—since June of 2004, 100,000 jobs lost in manufacturing in Toronto;

—25,000 jobs lost in Hamilton; and

—almost half of Thunder Bay's manufacturing jobs lost over the last couple of years.

Yet today, finally—okay, last week—finally, the McGuinty government wakes up and realizes, “Holy smokes, there's something going wrong here. Let's put a resolution so that we can bring this debate to the Legislature”—pitifully slow off the mark, and the resolution itself, pitifully absent of any real solutions, any real ways of dealing with the crisis.

In addition to those 230,000 jobs that were lost in manufacturing, more than 9,000 direct jobs in the forest products industry and approximately 35,000 indirect jobs were also lost.

I shouldn't have to tell the members opposite how important these jobs are. I think they should know, because these are the kinds of jobs that exist in communities and make communities good places to live, where quality of life is good and where people can not just eke out an existence but can prosper and can have the benefits of a decent wage and a decent standard of living.

Just today, in our clippings that we received that come across our desk every morning, Daimler says that it will close the Sterling Truck factory in St. Thomas. This is a company that cut its workforce in half not so long ago, announced layoffs that are coming in November, and now have said that, come March, the plant is totally closing—1,400 jobs gone. This is after that very same community, just a couple of weeks ago, lost 175 jobs at Alcoa Electrical and Electronic Systems, a company that actually provides parts and supplies to the auto sector. So there you go; St. Thomas: add it to the list, the mounting and rising list of good job losses in province of Ontario.

It's not just important that these jobs are being lost in isolation, but these are some of the best jobs that exist in the province. They pay an average of \$2.50 an hour more than the average wage in the province. They're not just important—because in addition to paying those better wages, they also come with the good benefits and the good pensions that I already mentioned. So it's quite interesting that workers who tune in are suddenly realizing that their government not only hasn't done anything practical in terms of responding to these job losses over the past four years but only now is bringing the issue to the table of this Legislature for a discussion.

It is frankly shocking that that's the situation, that it has taken the McGuinty government more than four years to come up with a paltry resolution that we're going to be debating today instead of implementing real practical solutions; instead of keeping those jobs here,

preventing them from walking out the door; instead of making sure that those jobs are replaced by decent, high-quality jobs where wages are good. What do we have instead? Instead, we have very poorly paying jobs that are replacing those jobs. We have a temporary agency system in the province of Ontario where people are working, sometimes three and four jobs, to make ends meet. People are working at these temp agencies. The temp agency is raking in sometimes two times what the worker is being paid in wages—no benefits, no pensions, no dental; nothing like that. You can work for a temp agency and you can maybe get 10 bucks or 12 bucks an hour, but the temp agency is getting 20 bucks an hour. So they're exploiting your labour, and that's what this government condones in Ontario—a disgraceful system where temporary agencies are allowed to exploit workers in the most vile of ways. The government needs to start cleaning up labour standards in this province, and they need to start making sure that workers who put in a hard day of work get a good day's pay back for that. They need to make sure these companies cannot siphon off the value that these workers bring to our economy. It's a disgusting system and one that needs to be addressed.

What's happened, meanwhile, is that Dalton McGuinty has indicated that the manufacturing and forestry job crisis is kind of isolated. The reality is that—and everybody knows it, and I think it was illustrated in my point just now about the other company in St. Thomas, Alcoa—when those jobs walk out the door, it's not just the main manufacturers that are affected. The ripple effect in the economy in local communities is significant. It's not only the main manufacturer, but it's all of those smaller companies that supply parts, that supply cafeteria trucks—even those coffee trucks—and that supply other pieces that will be used in the manufacturing of some of our most important pieces. Take the example of the auto sector. You have the big manufacturer, whether it be Ford, GM, or whatever it is, and then you have all of those other pieces that go into that car that are affected—everything from handles to headlights to bumpers to seats, trim, dashboards, steering wheels, you name it. All of those other electronic systems, like Alcoa, all of those other companies, then begin to feel the ripple effect as well and they end up laying off their workers and those plants close as well.

The problem we have in Ontario isn't new and it isn't something that suddenly has come upon us. The erosion of our manufacturing sector has been long, it has been painful and it has been largely ignored by the McGuinty government. We actually believe that there are things the government could have been doing and should have been doing. You may know that we've been putting forward a number of solutions. Unfortunately, the government has decided they weren't interested in the solutions that the New Democrats brought to the table. We do believe that they have to play an active role in protecting good-paying jobs, and when those jobs can't be saved, we need to make sure that the government is being proactive in protecting the interests of workers, which this government has not done at all in Ontario.

Interjections.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I think it's really sad that the members of the Liberal government across the way think it's funny that workers lose their jobs, and they think it's funny that workers lose their pensions, and they think it's funny that workers lose their benefits. Well, shame on them. They think it's funny that workers can't find another job and funny that a worker is going to lose his or her home, probably have their marriage break up, and have their kids in crisis and counselling. Oh, that's a hilarious thing. So congratulations to all those MPPs who are mocking the very important issues that the opposition parties are bringing to the table. Shame on them.

I have to say, there have been opportunities that this government has ignored. There have been ideas and suggestions that this government has ignored that we have brought forward here as New Democrats. We've talked about things like an industrial hydro rate. We've talked about things like a job commissioner. Those are some of the solutions we've brought forward.

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We've raised a number of opportunities that the government has ignored, and then all of a sudden McGuinty comes to the table and says, "Oh, I've just noticed that there's a lot of job loss and we want to have a conversation about how we can make that better, how we can fix that problem." Well, guess what? You've turned a deaf ear for all these last several months and years while we've been bringing solutions to the table and you've chosen to ignore them. And now it's not your paycheque that's suffering, but it sure as heck is the paycheque of many, many families across this province, and that's a shameful situation.

The do-nothing approach of this government is something that they need to deal with. They need to start implementing some of the solutions that we've brought forward. Not only are those the kinds of things that we've talked about, notwithstanding that the minister earlier talked about her tour, the reality is that we do need to provide opportunities for people in Ontario to manufacture products again that we're consuming. That's one of the realities that we have to come to grips with. We can't just be relying all the time on purchasing from outside. We need to start retooling our own manufacturing sector to start creating jobs with the products that we're currently getting elsewhere.

I don't think that's a flawed policy. The minister of international development and trade might think that that's flawed, but I think that workers here in Ontario have the skills, the capacity, the training, the knowledge to be able to manufacture many, many things here in Ontario that they no longer manufacture anymore. Why would we waste those skills? Why would we waste all of the training and all of the capacity that we have here in Ontario by just throwing up our hands and saying that it's okay to have those plants close, have those workers not have the ability to earn a living in Ontario anymore? So I think a Buy Ontario policy is a smart policy and one that this government needs to really get serious about.

The other thing is, we have to make it more difficult, frankly, to just allow companies to walk out of this province. We need to toughen up plant closure legislation so that it ensures that everything possible is done to prevent a profitable plant or mill from closing. In addition, we have to enhance the kinds of severance responsibilities that these companies have for their workers, because workers are always at the back of the line, and that's unacceptable. We need to put workers at the front of the line where they belong, particularly after working sometimes decades in these plants and then being left with nothing at all. We need to expand the severance eligibility and increase the advance notice in situations of mass layoffs. These are some of the things that this government needs to do to try to protect workers from the closures that are happening all around us.

Pension and wage protection, protection of people's vacation pay, protection of people's holiday pay: When these plants close down and walk out of the province, those companies—they could be multi-billion-dollar companies that are completely profitable worldwide, internationally, but they think it's okay to walk away and leave Ontario workers without a severance package, with unpaid wages or severance or vacation pay that's owing. It's absolutely unacceptable.

So those are some of the ideas that we've been bringing forward, and I think there are many, many more, including the—

Interjection.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Again, I have to say that I find it really shocking that the people across the way, the Liberal MPPs, think it's funny when we're talking about job losses in Ontario. It's actually quite sad, and it's actually reflective of the lack of action of this government. If their MPPs think it's a joke, then of course they're not doing anything to encourage their government to actually act on any of these issues, so then it becomes very obvious why they haven't acted: because they have MPPs who poke fun and make jokes about the real pain and the real suffering that's happening here in Ontario.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Name names.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: So then it's no surprise that we have the member from Algoma-Manitoulin who's making fun of the workers in his community who have lost their jobs. I think that's fairly sad and I think it's fairly indicative of the do-nothing government with a bunch of do-nothing MPPs who didn't bother to put the fire to the feet of their own minister and their own Premier.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I just want to set the record straight here on some of the comments that were made by the member from Hamilton Centre. I've got to tell you, I'm really quite taken aback. We have brought forward not only a five-point plan; we have been consistent in our platform since 2003, the investments that we would make with the auto sector and the manufacturing sector and working with our business community. But what I found

offensive today were the comments that she made that were terribly inappropriate about members from across the way. They were wrong and she needs to apologize, and I will expect that to happen. Quite frankly, she knows better than that, Mr. Speaker.

But one of the things I want to say and get on the record too is that that member has voted against every strategy that we have brought forward to help the workers of Ontario, so don't stand in this House and give us a lecture about how we should conduct ourselves. I think that's terribly inappropriate. If there are comments that come, they need to be focused on what the motion speaks to and speak about the investments that we have made. She also needs to go further to explain to the workers in my riding why she didn't support our manufacturing strategy. Why won't she support my workers who are laid off in the riding of Huron-Bruce? We have been affected through Volvo; we have been affected through CanGro.

We have made investments. We have a five-point plan. They recognize that. But one of the points—and I want to get back to Volvo and CanGro, but one of the points that the member from Hamilton Centre voted against, part of our five-point plan, was our investment in infrastructure. That was part of our budget. It also meant a legislative change so that we could come forward with investing in our municipalities as well. That means our roads and bridges.

Both sides—the official opposition, the member from the third party—voted against investments that were going to help ridings like mine. Why would they do that? That's \$28.5 million and \$18.5 million. That's just one of the investments that were made. My constituents want to know why they wouldn't support the investments in my community.

When we talk about building a skilled workforce, we understand that that's also part of the five-point plan. I want to relate a story. As everyone in this House knows, Bruce Power is in my riding. I just wanted to explain one of the challenges as we go through a \$6-billion retooling at Bruce Power that was made possible in conjunction with the McGuinty government. We are retooling part of our reactors right now, so the tubes are pulled out, then it has to be rebuilt within, and then the tubes go back in. The CEO had the opportunity to go and have a look at the work one day. He went inside the tubes and he wanted to meet the welders who were doing the work. Both of those welders were over 71 years old. That's who they had to go and get the help from to get the level of skill that was required in order to do this job.

So when I have the opportunity to go out and talk to my business community, which is on a regular basis, they tell me they need more skilled labour. This is a specific example that we can talk about, and it's also part of our environment, that we must ensure we have the technology that can take us into the future. That's part of building our skilled workforce.

I have the opportunity to speak to a number of our trades, and there's constant pressure on the trades to

produce more and more. So the investments that we have made in our education system will not only assist us from today, going forward, but far into the future, recognizing the higher skills that we will need.

That's just two of the points.

Certainly, cutting business taxes—and in the riding of Huron–Bruce, this represents \$250,000. I'm only going to mention one part of it; there was much more work done. But that represents \$250,000 for my small businesses. In rural areas, we rely a lot on our small business community, as all over the province of Ontario does. We know that a strong small business community is a strong Ontario. When we talk about partnerships with businesses, our automotive investment strategy, our advanced manufacturing strategy—and then it also brings me back to where I started.

1650

I want to keep my eye on the clock because there are a number of members who want to speak, so I want to give them time.

But I did want to talk about CanGro, where we lost 150 jobs in the south end of my riding, and Volvo, where we lost 500 jobs.

We have had Volvo in our community for decades upon decades. You all know it as Champion road graders. It has always been a very good employer. It's a proud tradition that we have in our community to be able to provide the road equipment that builds the world. So it is with great loss that we see the closure. This is something that they have been working on for a couple of years, and in Europe there were 1,800 job losses as well. There are two years; they're working on a closing strategy right now, and we will work with the company to see where we can assist. We'll also ensure that the second-stage career opportunities are available to them and all the resources will go to help all of those who are displaced. Certainly, the company will be taking a number of the employees within the organization as well, and I'm sure that they will be able to reach, with the union, a successful closing agreement that will be beneficial to both.

The last point is innovation. When we think about innovation, what does that look like? It can have so many different faces throughout the province of Ontario. In every part of Ontario, it really does look different. One of the things that I wanted to talk about for just a minute was, through our rural economic development—and I know that the minister of innovation is sitting there, and I will get to that as well. But I wanted to talk about the opportunities, and I call this a part of the innovation. We've been able to invest over \$2 million through rural economic development, which we fondly refer to as the RED program. One of the things that we were able to do was an equine centre in Clinton. That will help not only the horse industry; it will also help our education system so that we can advance the skills that are needed in today's agricultural community while working in conjunction with our schools. It's also part of a greater innovation, as they hope to move into the breeding part

of it as well. There will be further announcements coming from that, so stay tuned.

The other investments that have been made are over \$1 million in broadband in Huron county, and also, we have made investments in Kincardine and the Pavilion, which speaks to the tourism as well, through RED. We've also made investments in our health care sector. This is all part of a significant investment that will represent over \$30 million over four years.

On to innovation, specifically—I do want to close my remarks with these comments—in a rural area, we look forward to moving toward the technology that will be required in the future. We see a transition happening throughout the province, and certainly there are many challenges that we face today, but we know that by continuing to invest in not only our people but in our business community and also in the research and innovation that looks to the future—we know that this is a solid business plan that has been in place since we formed government in 2003, and it's one that we constantly are going back to and reinforcing as we continue to evolve. I don't want to say that there haven't been challenges, but I think that we must always talk about the investments that have been made and the adjustments that will be made to reflect the future challenges.

Thank you for allowing me to speak to this very important motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I really appreciate the opportunity to speak on this very pressing issue. It's on the minds of all Ontarians. The economy is first and foremost right now, given the climate in the economy throughout the world, really.

I'd like to just respond for a moment to the member from Huron–Bruce. It really does confound me that the member talks about the opposition voting against initiatives, voting against the plan. The opposition cannot stymie a vote that the government brings forward, so 71 members voting en masse for any initiative wins—is that right? Let me tell you, the reason that this official opposition did not vote for the initiatives and did not vote for the five-point plan is because there's no reality to it. There is no reality to it. Prove to me that anything positive and concrete has come from any of those plans or any of those initiatives. They lack reality. They are the sizzle that has fizzled, and that's all there is to it.

If the government were a business, our CFO would be standing here right now with the following question: "Where did all the money go?" Our CFO would ask, "How have you managed to implement the single largest tax increase in this province and still have nothing for show for it?" Not to be easily cast aside, our CFO would continue with, "How can you ask our stakeholders for more capital when you have not done everything possible in-house to create a positive economic climate?"

We are not a business—I know that—but we do have a duty to act in a businesslike manner. Millions of Ontarians are relying on the McGuinty government to treat

their tax dollars as an investment, not as a private slush fund. The taxpayers of Ontario have worked hard for their contributions and, with rising prices, will be limiting their spending in order to balance their own books.

Our CFO here in the Legislative Assembly is Minister Duncan. Have we witnessed any positive, proactive steps by the minister to stimulate the economy? No, unfortunately, we have not. Have we witnessed any indication that the minister will be curbing spending? No, we have not witnessed that either; in fact, the opposite is true. Minister Duncan continues to approve the growth of public sector jobs while the private sector, a wealth-generator and a creator of quality of life, withers away in Ontario. Have we witnessed any reviews undertaken by the Minister of Finance to ensure that resources are being allocated wisely and cost-effectively? No, absolutely not. Have we seen this government engage the private sector, labour, academia in the creation of solutions and any areas of opportunity to move forward instead of backwards? Again, the answer is, unfortunately, no.

At a time of economic uncertainty, we have seen ministerial budgets balloon well past previous thresholds. Not only is spending growing rapidly, but also, the McGuinty government is consistently spending way beyond what it budgets for from year to year.

In the fiscal year 2007-08, the McGuinty government raked in, let me tell you, \$5.6 billion in excess revenue projections for that year; \$4.1 billion of that came just from taxes alone. Perhaps Premier McGuinty should spend some time with the Ontarians that he is demanding fairness for. Average Ontarians are curbing their spending with the goal of trying to insulate themselves and their nest egg in the face of the uncertain economy. Is that the tack of the McGuinty government? Of course not. Instead of using unprecedented revenue to provide tax relief or to pay down the debt, the government has used this money to fuel year-end spending sprees. Well, my vote, my constituents' vote, is not for sale.

As this government continues to mortgage against future taxes—that's our children's Ontario—total debt continues to climb. It's climbed up to \$168 billion. That's \$13,125 for every man, woman and child in our province. Perhaps Premier McGuinty has chosen to read verbatim from the David Peterson playbook, where spending increased by 45% in a short five years. Taxpayers will clearly remember the state of our economy after David Peterson and Bob Rae tried to spend their way out of a recession. I will remind everyone here today that it was the Progressive Conservative government that brought prosperity back to Ontario. We created a positive economic climate during tough, tough times and made Ontario an attractive province to invest in, and we did this by reducing taxes and reducing red tape. It has taken this Liberal government less than five years to decimate those efforts.

1700

Fairness for Ontarians: That's what the PC Party of Ontario has been about since the establishment of our party. Time and time again we are asked to set the econ-

omy of this province back on the right track after governments have had their way with it. We are comfortable in that role and proud of our record.

My caucus colleagues and I continue to urge the Premier and his finance minister to take action now and stem the tide of business leaving Ontario. We are not opposed to working with Ottawa to keep more of Ontarians' hard-earned dollars here in our communities. What my PC colleagues and I want to see is a concerted effort to first utilize our current tax dollars wisely before asking for more money from taxpayers and from the federal government.

Premier McGuinty's "fairness for Ontarians" motion is a perfect illustration of his lack of understanding of this basic principle, a principle that we as Progressive Conservatives not only embrace but that is factored into our approach to every policy. The fact is that there is only one taxpayer, and that taxpayer has limits.

Instead of looking for ways to get more money out of average Ontarians, the Premier should be taking actions that our caucus has recommended. Those actions are: lowering business taxes to keep businesses here within our borders and continue to attract new business; fixing the worst tax structure in the free world; and repealing the regressive health tax, the profits of which are used as a Liberal slush fund instead of being reinvested into our health care. We have been asking for the repeal of the health tax for a very long time from this side of the House. If you remove over \$2 billion collected by the McGuinty government under the health tax, there is still a surplus of \$3 billion. Let me do the math. Do we really need that \$2 billion? To me and to my constituents, if the McGuinty government was fiscally responsible, they could repeal the health tax without cutting services to health care. Ontarians would be able to keep more of their own money, and perhaps even put it back into our economy, giving it that much-needed spark. These would be proactive initiatives. But he is not a proactive Premier; he is a money-hungry Premier.

A few weeks ago we lost a solid business that contributed about \$4 million a year to a local economy in Guelph. It meant a lot to Guelph. The saddest part is that this business was shut down arbitrarily by one of Mr. McGuinty's own ministries, for no reason whatsoever and with no warning whatsoever. The Premier and his ministers crossed the border of arrogant a long time ago. The Ministry of Labour did not give them a warning and did not issue a compliance letter or a follow-up inspection date. They just closed them down. This company was the only one of its kind in Canada, and now it's leading the way in the United States. The owner could have fought this closure. She could have taken the ministry to court, gone through the proper channels and tried to reopen her company in Ontario. But do you know what? She was tired. She was tired of the high taxes, tired of jumping through hoops, paying more through the nose, when just a few hours down the highway she could really focus her time on her business and her employees. It is a loss for that community and a loss for Ontario because

she contributed to her community, not just by employing people but through minor sports leagues, charitable organizations and municipal taxes. John Tory and our PC caucus want to put an end to these depressing stories. We want to bring back hope to the businesses and bring back hope to the hard-working taxpayer in the province of Ontario. But we know Ontario isn't lost yet. We brought it back from the brink of financial ruin at the hands of another Liberal, Bob Rae, and we can do it again.

In September, just a few short weeks ago, it was the PC caucus who brought the best and the brightest out to the Legislature—the best and the brightest from academics to economists, to labour, to business people—and we brainstormed ways to get Ontario back on track. As Progressive Conservatives, we believe in inclusivity in order to reach our best conclusions. Our party has developed several concrete opportunities for our province to change its present course and rekindle our economic growth. The PC Party will continue to create plans and offer these concrete opportunities and solutions that will get our province back on track.

The Premier has indicated that he is open to ideas from all members of the Legislature. Well, I for one am really pleased to hear that. But if history repeats itself, this may be yet another empty gesture. Tough economic times require leaders and they require actions. Premier McGuinty and Minister Duncan have failed on both these accounts. The “Don't worry, be happy,” responses offered by the Premier and the Minister of Finance over the last four years have come home to roost.

You can imagine how excited our caucus was when the Liberal government indicated that they were putting forward a bill, Ideas for the Future Act. Our hopes were dashed as quickly as they were raised. Premier McGuinty laid waste another opportunity to have a meaningful, positive impact on our economy. By using narrow, short-sighted definitions of both innovation and commercialization in Bill 100, he short-changed Ontario businesses. Only a tiny segment of the economy, representing less than 2% of the jobs in Ontario, will have just an outside chance of seeing any benefits. Huge opportunities were lost with Bill 100, and it was reduced to yet another meaningless photo op.

The PC Party is a stark contrast. It's the party of enterprise. We believe that broad-based tax reductions, reducing red tape, are the key to turning the economy around. We understand business and how it operates and we support measures to reduce the tax burden and increase investment. We don't just help a privileged few friends; we make across-the-board efforts to help businesses stay competitive in a global market—businesses that keep Ontarians, ordinary Ontarians, employed in good jobs. We cut over 1,300 superfluous regulations when we were in government as one of the ways to get Ontario back in business. We didn't just pick a few companies run by our friends or companies that would give us a big media push. No, we cut taxes, we found efficiencies and we repealed regulations in all sectors of the economy. Our reward was a stronger, diverse Ontario economy, not a photo op and a headline.

How did we decide on that path? Well, we listened. We listened to business. Yes, we did listen to business, but we also listened to the average Ontarians. We didn't talk down to business and tell them how to run their show. We didn't pay them lip service and say, “We understand your pain, but here's another layer of taxation and another regulation that you need to budget for.” No, our approach was different and will continue to be different from that of the Liberal government. We listen to what people say and those who employ them; we listen to Ontarians.

Our caucus is listening right now to what employers have to say, and they are crying out for help from this government. They are sending up a clear warning that something needs to change now. Businesses need less regulation and less taxes; they need action, not lip service; they need leadership, not photo ops, and they need it now.

1710

The Premier has asked us for our advice, and we are offering him advice from this side of the House. We are giving him clear methods to get Ontario back on track and Ontarians back to work.

Bill 100 should be amended to include broad-based tax relief that encourages entrepreneurship and innovation across all sectors of the Ontario economy. All businesses, new and old, should be encouraged to innovate and have equal access to this incentive.

Why put a cap on intellectual property? In some cases, an existing business will be better equipped in terms of resources and expertise to bring new IP to market faster and cheaper than a new start-up. This approach would mean that, in Canada, the innovations that were made by Masonite, Four Seasons, Couche-Tard, Gildan, Magna and McCain—these were global leaders—would not be counted as innovation. Not only would many of Ontario's great innovations not have been eligible for this exemption when they were start-ups, but many new start-ups in the capital-intensive priority sectors take up to 10 years to become profitable.

Bill 100 does nothing to help the struggling auto manufacturing sector, does nothing to help agriculture, forestry or mining. The Premier has paid lip service time and time again to the massive job losses in these sectors. He has offered them unemployment insurance and a job that can't sustain a pet, let alone a family.

Our fearless Premier blames the United States, the federal government and the world economy, but a strong leader would create initiatives for us to resolve these issues, not simply to ask for more money.

Chambers of commerce know that the fastest way to achieve positive growth is to expand existing businesses. Perhaps the McGuinty government doesn't listen to the chambers of commerce. Well, we do. It's the fastest way to put your finger on the pulse of the business community.

Minister Duncan, you not only have an economics degree from McGill University but a master's in business administration from the University of Windsor. While

that may have taken place a few years ago, surely there are a few basic economic concepts that you could put into use in your current portfolio.

I would encourage Minister Papatello to return to her Rotary Club roots instead of travelling to far-off lands to find out what the business community really needs.

I would like to think that the business experience and education amassed on the Liberal benches could be put to good use. There is only one reason I can think of that this life experience is not being used, and that is that somebody at the top is shushing you. I'm not at the cabinet table—not yet, anyway—but some of you over there are, and should be bringing your experience to that table for the benefit of our economy. If you aren't going to do so, you are wasting our time, our money and our increasingly smaller window of opportunity to get this province back on track.

It's not surprising that the PCs have a plan. We have pooled our business and our legislative experience. We have met with stakeholders, economists, business leaders and academics, and here's what they said: Lower taxes, reduce our regulatory burden and fix our tax structure. It's simple enough that the Liberal government can do it. The question is, will they?

Ontario has maintained the highest tax burden on costs, at 26.4%, and an incredible 34.8% tax on investment. This is the highest in Canada. We aren't just losing jobs to Mexico; we're losing jobs to Manitoba and points right here in Canada. Unless the Premier has struck a deal with you all, we need to stop the western migration of Ontario's businesses.

Premier, it's time to listen. We cannot afford to wait any longer.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member for Toronto–Danforth.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The confidence of the Minister of Transportation always impresses me.

Speaker, it's a pleasure to be able to comment on the debate before the House. The resolution that was put forward by the government is one that has numerous friendly sentiments in it, but no strategy and no direction for the province as a whole, and I find it quite extraordinary. I was listening to the minister from Windsor West, Sandra Papatello, talking about her travels, her experience with Canadian industry, our sales of products abroad. Frankly, listening to her, I wondered why we were having a debate at all, because clearly we were doing everything right. There was no strategy put forward by her talking about how you function within a globalized world, what it really means for Ontario to not have the advantage we've had in the past of low-cost energy, to be in a situation where trade deals have opened up our economy to competition and to lower pricing. That means it's very, very difficult for people to make a decent living.

When I listened to the minister talking about the new energy economy, talking about what other jurisdictions are doing, it struck me that here in Ontario we are doing

almost none of that. We here in Ontario are not doing what's being done in Quebec, where those who want to build new wind turbines in that province have to spend 60% of that investment in that province. It is generating investment and manufacturing so that the components that go into those wind turbines are actually made in Quebec. I checked with the legislative library here; we do not require that in Ontario. We don't have an approach that says, "Here's a new industry that's developing in the world. Here's an industry that will give tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of people an opportunity to make a decent living. Are we in fact getting into it in a substantial way?" The reality is, only as a purchaser of the end products and not as a jurisdiction that actually makes those products.

When we think about Ontario, we have a lot to be proud of. We have very skilled and capable people. When you travel around southwestern Ontario, you see industrial plant investment that's highly sophisticated, you talk to people who are well trained, motivated, who want to do good, quality work and they want to live a decent life, but they don't have a government, a Liberal government, that has a strategy to protect Ontario's economy in a globalized world, in a world where the rules are very different from what they were 20 years ago.

Many people have talked about this report from TD Economics talking about a vision of Ontario's economy. I don't agree with everything that's in this report, but there's a graph that I think people really need to see. I'll describe it to those who are watching this debate and I'll try to describe it to those few remaining hardy souls who are listening to me in this chamber. If you look at this graph, you will see that in Ontario and in Quebec, since about 2003-04, there has been a sharp decline in manufacturing employment. In Europe, there was a decline in the early part of the decade and it has essentially flattened out. In Japan, there was a decline in the early part of the decade and now it is starting to pick up. Those jurisdictions are obviously looking at strategies that are allowing them to protect part of their manufacturing base. The UK has not adopted a similar strategy; they show a very huge decline in their manufacturing base. But we, here in Ontario, drift along.

When we talk about investment for R&D or support for research and development, it's well and good, but what is that, in the end, focused on? What will we do in Ontario, what can we do in Ontario, that gives us a competitive advantage over the rest of the world? At this level of government we don't have control over trade deals. We can speak out, we can protest, we can make noise, but in the end the federal government will have the ability, the jurisdiction, to set those deals, and those deals have not been to our advantage on a regular basis. Fair trade, the auto pact, was a huge advantage to Ontario. It gave us the pillar of the auto industry, and that auto industry spun off a variety of other industries—in rubber, in glass, in steel. That advantage was taken away from us in a ruling by the World Trade Organization. So now we

have to find at this level of government advantages that will bring jobs and hold jobs.

What this government has not looked at, except in a negative way, is energy policy. When you read the TD Economics report talking about the loss of the advantage of low-cost energy, you have to recognize that this was a substantial pillar in Ontario's economic or industrial strategy. We have been subsidizing power costs because we made investments in very expensive technology: nuclear technology. When I asked the Minister of Energy today about the declining demand in this province and the fact that demand for power is falling faster than any projections the Ontario Power Authority put forward two years ago when they developed the plan for the new nuclear power plants in this province, his answer to me was, "Well, our conservation efforts are doing very well." No. The reality is, demand for power has fallen by about 700 megawatts in 2008. That is a very substantial drop in power demand.

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We are continuing to invest in extremely expensive power generation while our demand for that power continues to go down. In the end, the mathematics of that is very simple: The cost of power is driven up, and our desirability, our advantage and our competitiveness are undermined.

Moody's and Standard and Poor's are projecting that the current cost of new nuclear power is 15 cents a kilowatt hour. That is not economically competitive, and yet we are barrelling ahead with a plan for substantial investment in nuclear. Who is going to be able to afford to buy that power? What industry is going to come into this province to buy nuclear at that rate? Wind is 11 cents a kilowatt hour; nukes, 15 cents a kilowatt hour; conservation, 2 cents to 4 cents a kilowatt hour. So you look at the numbers and you can see very quickly that we're going down a pathway that's making us less and less competitive, less and less attractive, less and less able to protect jobs and bring new ones into this province.

This Liberal government is essentially on autopilot. We're swept this way and that way by the tides of international economic dynamics. But in the end we don't have, out of this government, a strategy to actually create and protect jobs. We aren't looking at a focus that needs to be there.

I talked about this before, but I'll reference the fact that at the beginning of the 20th century, the Conservative government in this province developed Ontario Hydro, understanding that low-cost power would drive industrialization out of the province, and they were right. They were more right than they thought, because in fact it didn't just result in the attraction of industry to Ontario. It also developed within Ontario the expertise in financing and hydroelectric technology that allowed us to compete around the world. So Canadians who had learned financing here, who had learned hydroelectric technology here, were able to go out into the rest of the world and use that expertise to employ themselves, to create value.

We don't have that kind of thinking with this current government. There's talk about how Ontario industry is hit hard by the volatility of oil prices. That's true. The reality in this world is that the cheap oil, which used to be able to be produced for \$2 or \$3 a barrel—you're now running out of that, and we have oil from sources that are more and more expensive. Some of the more recent tar sands oil sources are \$70, \$90 a barrel; some of the offshore oil that's coming in is \$70 to \$90 a barrel.

The simple reality is that here in Ontario, as long as we tie ourselves to the oil and gas infrastructure, we are tied to volatility and we are tied to costs that make us less and less attractive. If we actually want to be a jurisdiction that's attractive, that draws in investment, we have to move very quickly to get off that dependence and do what was done in this province at the beginning of the previous century and develop our indigenous energy sources, which are renewable. A strategy like that would actually drive technological innovation, would actually drive manufacturing, would actually create and protect jobs. But there is nothing like that being put forward—nothing. In the absence of a strategy that actually will create and protect jobs, that will actually make Ontario attractive to those who want to create employment, we face continuing decline in manufacturing employment and continuing decline in our standard of living.

It's useful to have a debate; it gets ideas out on the table. But unless this government actually decides to develop a strategy and carry through that strategy, it will mean nothing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I'm pleased this afternoon to be able to join in the debate regarding the resolution brought forward by the Premier.

I want to begin just by talking a little bit, generally, about my riding. It's probably not unlike, in some ways, each of the ridings of the members in this Legislature. I think it's important that as we're having this debate, we come back at times to the people and the nature of the people we represent. My riding of Pickering-Scarborough East is fairly suburban. Parts of the community are seniors, those who are retired, who have worked hard and in some cases invested well, living in homes for 30 and 40 and 50 years. Parts of the riding are made up of first and second-generation newcomers to this country, who are either just striking out in this country and planning a future for themselves and their children, or maybe they've been here one generation and are now seeing the fruits of their labour being expressed through their children, through the education they're acquiring, and as they seek out opportunities and jobs and building careers and families. My riding is made up of families who are multi-generational Canadian, who come from families who have grown up in this country, have moved to the riding from other locations, who are raising children, who are supporting grandchildren, who are working to support their parents. Those folks work in Toronto in many cases; they work in the 905 belt, in Peel region and

York region and Durham region. They're pretty typical. They're not typical of some ridings, because they are a suburban riding. In many cases, they feel that they're a bit of an island. The folks in Pickering don't necessarily feel very attached to the centre of Durham region and what's happening at times in Oshawa, and folks in the Scarborough East part of my riding sometimes don't feel very connected with what's happening in downtown Toronto, but they share the concerns of their neighbours and their friends and their families. And there's no question that at this point in time, people are concerned. We only need to look at what was happening during our own federal election and look south of the border at what's happening right now to understand and empathize with what's happening with individuals and families with their economic situation, whether they're seeking out jobs or retaining jobs, or the investments they've made for their retirement plans, and see those being taken apart to some extent. People want to see job stability—they want to be able to pay their bills, they want to be able to pay their mortgages—and they want to have some future financial security and security for their family. So, in that way, my riding is much like the ridings throughout this province.

I ran for this office some five years ago, and I did it primarily for one reason, I think, at the end of the day. It's one thing that sticks in my mind. I can remember the municipal governance model, where government is important, that the role you play in government elected office is important in your community. When I heard Mike Harris, the former Premier of this province—and I'll paraphrase in case I don't get it exactly right—saying, "We're not the government; we're here to fix the government," it struck me as odd. It was completely contrary to what I believe should be the role of government. I believe that those of us who are elected have a significant role as government. We're not just here to take the government apart in some fashion.

I believe it's important for governments to be the provider of quality public services: public services such as education, public services such as health care, public services such as community safety. You have seen over the five years that we've had the privilege to serve on this side of the Legislature, those who serve in cabinet and those members who provide support to those cabinet ministers, that we've focused on the importance of public services, and those public services that we have improved, enhanced, restored, will put this province in good stead on a go-forward basis. It will be the quality of education we provide to our young people. It will be the access and capacity of our health care system to ensure that we are healthy through all stages of our lives. It'll be the capacity to ensure that our communities are safe places to be, that will restore to this province, in many ways continue to provide, the life that we want for ourselves and our families. It will provide the level of confidence that will assist us in moving through difficult economic times. It's knowing that government is there to provide and support those basic, quality public services

on which we depend, on which we have built our families and will continue to do so. That's the primary reason that I was engaged in this process and am so pleased with the plans and strategies that we put forward during that period of time.

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During my time here, I've had the chance to serve directly with both the Chair of Management Board, Mr. Phillips, in that original capacity—now a different model—as well as with two finance ministers, the Honourable Greg Sorbara and the Honourable Dwight Duncan, as their parliamentary assistant. I've had the chance, in that role, to see the workings of this government, the workings of the bureaucracy of this government, and have gained a tremendous amount of respect for the expertise, the quality of service and the folks who are doing the job on our behalf. They've provided us with good advice, and we've taken much of that advice and implemented it as part of our overall strategies.

The oppositions speak to a number of matters. I for one know, from what they've said and what will be recorded as part of that in Hansard, that our government will look carefully at the ideas they put forward. But I can tell you that if those ideas are completely contrary to the policies and platform we put forward for election, then there's little likelihood that we would adopt those ideas as part of an economic strategy. If their ideas can be built into the economic strategy—the plan we put in place—if those ideas can enhance those plans, if those ideas can provide value added to those plans, then I'm convinced that our government will look carefully at those—our Minister of Finance, the Premier and others—and find ways to incorporate those ideas. But if they're simply the platform they ran on that the public in this province rejected a year ago, then it's unlikely that we would want to adopt those.

We talk about cutting taxes as one of the strategies, strategically, for our five-point plan. We've been doing that and we continue to do that. We've eliminated the capital tax for manufacturers and the resource sector—we made that retroactive to January 2007—and we're going to completely eliminate that tax by 2012. Just the retroactive portion of it meant that some \$190 million in rebates was going to our manufacturing and resource sector. They need that money. They need that money to be able to invest and to be able to retain and grow their companies.

We heard from the business community; we listened to them. We took a look at the business education taxes, which were seen as one of the regressive business taxes, and we're making significant changes to reduce that business education element from the business community, and it's being accelerated in northern Ontario, where it's most needed. We put in place and debated a bill recently regarding opportunities for the commercialization of new ideas in colleges, universities and institutions in this country that develop new products here in Ontario—exemptions from taxes for a 10-year period. Now, we all know that in the early going, it's

hard for companies to get the point of paying corporate taxes the first few years, but this is a clear incentive to support companies that want to do business here.

We believe that infrastructure is an important part of the structure of this province. We know that job creation and infrastructure is one way to get and keep people working here in the province of Ontario. We know that our hospitals, our roads, our schools and our bridges were allowed to deteriorate during the last decade or more, so we're making very significant investments in infrastructure. I've been driving down the road, over the past few weeks, from my home to the 401, where I have to come in to work, and I've been looking at the local high school. My kids went to that high school. As a matter of fact, my wife actually went to that high school for a period of time. It's Dunbarton High School on Whites Road in Pickering. I'm noticing that after a number years, it's getting some renewal going on. It's getting a bit of a facelift to the front of the building. There's an addition going on, and there are new access points being put in for an emergency, the point being that this is money being invested in the school system that was sorely neglected for a period of time. It's putting people to work, it's investing in products and services, and it's investing here in the province of Ontario.

In the region where I live, although my riding is split between Toronto and Durham region—the member from Oshawa spoke earlier, and during his speech he mentioned the courthouse and he mentioned the cancer centre. These are very significant public sector investments in new infrastructure here in the province of Ontario. The courthouse is probably the largest single public facility or institution that's being built in the province at this point in time: very, very significant.

We're investing over \$1 billion right now, sharing in the surplus that this province had the pleasure to be able to have come to it as a result of the economy we're in. We're putting some to debt, and a significant amount, over \$1 billion, is going to municipalities so those roads and bridges, particularly in rural Ontario, that are so desperately in need of repair and rebuild can get done. We're buying Canadian materials. We'll be buying Ontario materials and we'll be using Ontario labour to get those jobs done.

As part of the plan, you need to partner with business. We've heard the opposition speak to the matter of talking to the business community and talking to the local business organizations. We believe in partnering with business. It's why during our first mandate we established an auto sector strategy investing some \$500 million to leverage some \$8 billion in new development. Now, those are dollars well spent in supporting a manufacturing industry that is strong and remains strong in this province, in spite of the challenge, in spite of what's happening internationally. We have new plants being built in the Woodstocks; we have new engine plants being built by Honda here in southern Ontario. So we've taken the opportunity to partner with business to leverage significant new investments.

We know that it's also important to support innovation in the province, and we have the new Ministry of Research and Innovation that was set up by the Premier under his leadership initially and then turned into a full ministry with others having ownership and responsibility for that.

We have a plan. It's a clear plan. It has five points to it. Each of them can be articulated in a fashion that says, "This is the job that we're getting done today." We want to build on that plan. We welcome the opposition's insight as to how we can enhance that plan within the context of making it better. I look forward to this debate continuing. I look forward to hearing the comments that are being made by the members on all sides of this House, and all of those will be taken into consideration. I look forward to the fall economic statement to be brought forward by the finance minister within a week or so, so we will have a fuller view of the current economic climate as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to be able to join in the debate today on the motion put forward by the Premier last week.

In my remarks today, I'd like to concentrate on something that the government hangs out as the keys to the eventual prosperity of this province, and that's their five-point plan. I had a look at what, in fact, the five-point plan was. I also looked at what were some of the initiatives that have taken place within the province and what some of the other experts in the province and in Canada are telling us.

First of all, I want to quote the Premier from his remarks last week. He says, "I want to acknowledge the reality of our economic challenges and the impact these are having on our families and businesses." Well, I think on this side of the House we were quite surprised at how late he was in coming to recognize that there were real economic challenges. And yes, we have been saying on this side of the chamber for well over a year the kinds of impact that they are having.

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We have stood in our places and referred to communities across the province where job losses have been devastating. I say "devastating" because of the fact that while it appears in the paper as a number of job losses in a particular community, we understand that for every person—every number is in fact a person, and a person whose income has disappeared, whose family is going to be impacted by this and whose community is going to be impacted. So often, just because it's a raw number, you don't stop and realize all of the indirect impacts that every one of those numbers has on individuals, their families and their communities. It was quite a surprise for us to realize that it wasn't until October 8 that this reality came to the Premier.

I also think, for instance, of not only the job losses that have come at increasing speed, I would say, across the province, but the Minister of Finance stood up in his place many months ago and talked about the investment

in commercial paper and the kinds of losses that it represented for the province. So we saw investments, then, that had been made in the name of the province of Ontario that were obviously not good ones, shaky at best, and we're talking numbers, I seem to recall, in the neighbourhood of a \$100-million loss. Again, I was surprised that it was October 8 of this year that the Premier came to recognize economic challenges and impacts.

As a member of the opposition, whenever we've raised the issue about this economic reality, the government has always talked about its five-point plan. I began to look at this a little more carefully to see where in fact the five-point plan fits with the kind of economic reality that the Premier was referring to. It seemed to me there were a number of things that seem to be overlooked in that real look at the economy. I think, for instance, of the fact that this year the TD Bank reported that Ontario is on track to becoming a have-not province. It is set to receive equalization payments in 2010, when per capita GDP is projected to fall to 5% below the national average.

Mr. Speaker, you've got to remember that this is in the context of the historic leadership of the province of Ontario where, quite rightly, and by many—we have always been first or second and we have always accepted the responsibilities and equalization payments that that entails. We have always accepted that historic role. But the idea that, by 2010, Ontario would be eligible to receive \$400 million in federal equalization transfers in fiscal 2010-11 and \$1.3 billion in fiscal 2011-12—I think that comes as a real shock to many in this province.

We look at another feature, then, of the McGuinty economy. For the first time in 30 years, Ontario's unemployment rate exceeded the national average, rising to 6.5% in December 2007. Ontario's unemployment rate remains above the national average and is forecast by all major banks to stay that way through 2009. Ontario has gained a total of 501,800 new jobs since October 2003, but almost half of these new jobs, 237,100, are public sector jobs versus a mere 191,000 private sector jobs. This represents a 22% increase in public sector jobs versus a mere 5% in private sector jobs. Since 2003, part-time employment has increased 15%, whereas full-time employment has only increased 7%. The TD Bank Financial Group says, "We anticipate further bad news in Ontario's employment pipeline over the next 18 months, with the jobless rate moving above 7% and personal income growth essentially stalling."

I mentioned that I wanted to look at the five-point plan, and one of the points in that is expanding trade ties. I want to just give you a few statistics that demonstrate the kind of challenge that this particular part of the five-point plan represents.

The first one, then, is on the international merchandise reports: Over the first six months of 2008, the value of Ontario international merchandise exports is down 12.9% from the same period in 2007. That's one year, folks. The value of imports is 4.9% lower.

On the issue of wholesale trade: Over the first five months of 2008, Ontario's wholesale trade is 2.7% lower than during the same period in 2007.

Manufacturing sales over the first six months of 2008: Ontario's manufacturing sales are 7.5% lower than during the same period in 2007.

The St. Catharines Standard reported on October 2:

"Ontario will have to reinvent its economy if it hopes to weather the recent financial storm.

"With its manufacturing sector on the wane and former advantages, such as a weak dollar, gone, the province will have to make drastic changes to stay economically viable," TD Bank Financial Group chief economist Don Drummond said....

"I'm worried about Ontario's future," Drummond told the audience of 220" at the summit in Niagara-on-the-Lake. "I think you should be worried about it."

"The province should focus on training a top-quality labour force, investing in infrastructure and reducing taxes if it wants to stay competitive in the new economy....

"While the province has so far avoided a recession, Ontario is nearing zero growth," he said."

The issue of zero growth is, again, certainly something reported by others, as in the Thunder Bay Chronicle Journal and a Royal Bank study. The issue, then, of expanding trade ties I thought was interesting when we had the minister speak earlier. I was struck by the fact that when she went on the travelogue of what she had done and where Ontario had opened offices for business, there was never any indication, when places like London, Paris, Beijing and Munich particularly were referenced, about the measurement of success of opening these offices. They are there to "provide opportunity," in her words, but as far as expanding trade ties, we didn't have the same kinds of measures of outcome that would make people understand the value of the investment of these various centres that were being opened.

1750

I want to talk for a moment about another area that's in the five-point plan, and that's investing in infrastructure. I have to tell you that as the MPP for York-Simcoe, a place where this government has initiated Places to Grow, I find it very interesting as I go to my constituents, who have huge subdivisions and commercial growth taking place in communities like Bradford and throughout Innisfil, particularly, without matching infrastructure support. So you look at places like Bradford and Innisfil and East Gwillimbury and Georgina that every day suffer the effects of gridlock and every day see more and more people using the road network—there's no Bradford bypass. There's no demonstration of widening the 400. There's nothing that would help that commercial growth. When I look at the kinds of jobs that appear on the side of the road on the 404 in Newmarket, there are literally hundreds of jobs that are in that very small area. That's the kind of infrastructure that brings those jobs. By the way, those people who worry about building highways that create more and more car use forget that highways are the lifeblood of commercial investment. So when I look at all those jobs that are then closer to home, it seems to me that it's a very short-

sighted view, saying, on the one hand, yes, we're going to have a place to grow, but we're not putting the infrastructure money there. So when I look at this as part of the five-point plan, it seems to me that it's very, very selective.

One of the other areas in the five-point plan is investing in skills, and it's very interesting because on October 8 the Premier said, "The investments made over the last five years in vital public services and Ontarians' key priorities like skills training ... will help Ontario weather the economic challenges in the short term and emerge stronger than ever." But this past March, Ontario's colleges held a conference about skill shortages. Some 350 representatives from business, labour, education and government gathered together to address one of Ontario's most pressing challenges: the shortage of skilled workers. While the province struggles to retain people who have lost their jobs in the manufacturing and forestry sectors, there are also many employers struggling to find sufficient numbers of qualified people.

By the way, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities was at the conference and obviously should have passed on this message to the Premier because of the critical impasse that we have. There's such a short supply of boilermakers that they're looking worldwide to be able to do that. Even in the agency review of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies on September 17, the Ontario Construction Secretariat is quoted as estimating a shortage of 250,000 skilled workers that will be coming up over time with retirements.

So when the Premier talks about his five-point plan and the skills—we are in crisis. In fact, it's very, very difficult even in infrastructure planning to be able to be sure that when you approve a project, you aren't going to then find yourself with a skill shortage in a particular project that will then delay the ability of people to be able to finish that project on time, and since you're looking at

design, build, finance and maintain for 30 years, this becomes an extremely important issue.

Roger Martin told our economic round table that we educate only 50% of the people coming out of high school now with a post-secondary education of any sort. He said:

"Think about it. We're hoping that those 50% who don't get a stick of higher education are going to be able to compete with labour from China and India.

"We know that 70% of all jobs that are going to be created in this province in the next generation are going to require post-secondary education... So we're putting out 50% of people without any post-secondary education to compete for 30% of jobs for people without post-secondary education. What are the other 20% going to do? Nothing. We are making sure that they're not going to be productive. And we're making sure that the 50% competing for the 30% will drive down wages for those kind of jobs and the 50% competing for the 70% of post-secondary education jobs will drive up those wages and drive inequality."

Those are ideas that come out of the Premier's five-point plan. It seems to me that he needs to go back and have a look at the five-point plan. He needs to have a look at what's actually happening in this province and look at how he can use the time that he has as the Premier to be able to make it viable. In what I have briefly described, it's falling short. It is not doing what it is supposed to be doing on any front. Any of those five-point plans need a lot of revision, and they need it very, very soon.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): This House is adjourned until 9 of the clock on Thursday, October 16.

The House adjourned at 1758.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development / Ministre du Développement économique Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
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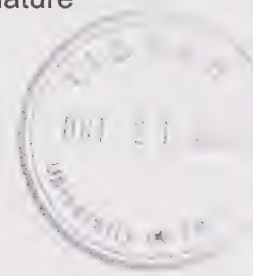
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Première session, 39^e législature

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Thursday 16 October 2008

Jeudi 16 octobre 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 16 October 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 16 octobre 2008

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the non-denominational prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 15, 2008, on the amendment to the amendment to the motion by Mr. McGuinty to acknowledge the economic challenges facing the province and continuing to implement an economic plan.

Hon. Michael Bryant: Mr. Speaker, may I say, perhaps on a point of order, that I'm advised that in the course of the debate, in the member's speech, we are going to hit the 6.5-hour mark. I wanted to indicate in advance that because of the importance of this special debate, it's our intention that the debate continue beyond that mark.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): So ordered. Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It is a pleasure to rise and speak to this motion. First, I should say that it's interesting that the motion was even made, that finally, the government admits that there is a problem—there's a problem with our economy. But it's interesting how the motion is phrased. They say that we are suffering from competition from China and India especially, and their response to that problem in the motion is to expand our trade ties within Canada and internationally and seek help from the federal government. Well, I certainly would propose, and we in the New Democratic Party would propose, that there is a great deal more that the McGuinty Liberals could be doing than just looking for a saviour from without, either internationally or federally.

I listened with some interest to the speech given by the Minister of International Trade and Investment yesterday. It was delivered with verve and élan, as she discussed travelling around the world, from Shanghai to Dubai. It was really quite exciting. I especially liked the part where she talked about being in the helicopter in Dubai circling a tower of glass that rose a kilometre up. This is fascinating stuff. I was reminded very much of one of my favourite movies, *Doctor Zhivago*, of that great scene where inside the restaurant people are dining with sterling silver, the best china, beautiful, beautiful costumes,

sparkling chandeliers, caviar, champagne on every table, and outside the restaurant, the children who are living on the streets are pressing their grubby little hands and faces to the window, watching with amazement the consumption within. Well, certainly most of the people who are living in Ontario right now are watching, like those little children in the movie *Dr. Zhivago*, the consumption that's going on within the McGuinty government, as they look in from outside, having lost their jobs—many of them lost their homes, lost their livelihoods—without much chance at ever finding that halcyon option that the Minister of International Trade and Investment has of flying off to Dubai or to Shanghai at a moment's notice.

The real question here is, whose economy is it anyway? Whose economy is suffering? Only 10% of Ontarians make over \$150,000 a year. I'm sure that the men and women who have been hosting the Minister of International Trade and Investment and the ones she has been flying around the world with are part of that 10% if they're from this province. I'm sure that their workers in many instances, and the workers who have been laid off, are part of the 90% of Ontarians who aren't going to benefit from trade with China, trade with India or trade with Dubai. They're not the ones who are going to benefit.

Last night, I had the great good fortune of being at one of our local business improvement area annual general meetings—the Roncesvalles one in this instance. But there was someone from TABIA, which is the oversight small business group for all of the BIAs across the Toronto area. I can tell you that for those small business people in that room, the fact that Sandra Pupatello is in Dubai, in China or in Shanghai is not going to help them one bit. We must remember that small businesses are the major employers across the province. They're the ones that always, and traditionally, produce the most jobs. Those folks want to see something very different out of the McGuinty Liberals, and they've been asking for the same things over and over again, without much success.

I think of Karl, Karl's butcher shop. That was a cause célèbre when poor Karl went out of business after 41 years as a butcher because of red tape and bureaucracy on the part of this government and a \$200,000 investment he was going to have to make to please them—after the city of Toronto had vetted him time and time again as being completely in compliance with the health regulations. So small business complains about red tape. Small business also complains about the unfairness of the business education tax and the way it's levied across

Ontario. This is something the McGuinty Liberals could address immediately. It's something that they could do easily to make it fairer. Right now, those who are in the 416 area pay way more than the those who are in the 905 area, and there's no justification for that.

Small business is also concerned in many instances about rate and rent controls. This is a problem for small business. You can imagine if you opened a retail store and your rent is one thing one year, and then your store is successful, and your landlord thinks, "Ah," does a little bit of a money grab, and doubles your rent the next year. There is no protection for small business in the way of rent control—not even rent guideline control. So that's something else that small business really needs from this government and really has not received.

Again, the fact that Sandra Papatello is in Dubai or Shanghai doesn't help the small business person who's on Main Street, not on Bay Street. We're talking to people on Main Street, and in my riding that means Queen Street or Dundas Street West; it means Roncesvalles Avenue; it means Bloor Street West. These are the people who need the help from this government; they're not getting it. If you're in one of the towers on Bay Street, maybe you're happy. Maybe you're one of the ones sitting in the helicopter as it's flying around the one kilometre glass tower in Dubai. Maybe you are, but I can tell you none of the small business owners who were at the dinner I attended last night were ever invited and will see no benefit whatsoever from those trips around the world.

Whose economy is it anyway? That's another question one can ask for all of those who are not small business owners but are those who actually work. Many of them have lost their jobs. Over 200,000, 230,000, 250,000, we hear, have lost their jobs in the last five years alone. Again, the fact that Ms. Papatello is in Dubai or Shanghai is not helping them.

0910

I think about someone in her own riding. This is a story that was in the *Globe and Mail*, about a gentleman in Windsor—and if we think the mortgage crisis is only hitting south of the border, we are absolutely incorrect. This gentleman was actually going to lose his house. He had, first of all, lost his job in the auto industry—so much for those investments. But second, his mortgage came up for renewal, and guess what? Most banks will not give you a mortgage beyond 80% of the value of your house. Well, this gentleman's house had dropped below the level his mortgage was at, so he actually owed more than his house was worth and the bank would not renegotiate with him.

This is a story that's going to repeat itself across the country. It's a chilling tale, because we know that many Ontarians, many Canadians, are mortgaged to more than 80% of their house, or if they're mortgaged to 80%, they're counting on a buoyant real estate market to see that value realized. When they go to renegotiate their mortgage and their house price drops dramatically—I know I'm speaking to people watching right now who are

in this position—they are in trouble. Couple that with the loss of a job at the same time, and they are in deep trouble indeed. This is within the minister's own riding in Windsor.

I wonder what he thought. It's sort of like the Doctor Zhivago story again: the little children pressed against the glass watching those people enjoy massive consumption within the glorious restaurant as they are kind of watching from outside. I imagine that he listened to the tales of international travel with the same sense as that child in Moscow during the reign of the czars. It's not going to help him. It's not going to help him renegotiate his mortgage; it's not going to help him get a job.

Then comes the question, in terms of whose economy is it, of what kind of job we're talking about. What kind of jobs are we going to provide the citizens of Ontario with her junkets to places like China and India?

If I know one thing about China—and I was quite shocked to hear that another trade office is opening there after all the promises, all the pressure on this government to speak about human rights in China, to speak about the trials and tribulations of the Tibetan people, many of whom live in my riding and who have been demanding some action of the McGuinty government. They're not saying, "Don't do trade with China," they're not saying, "Don't visit China." What they're saying is, "If you go to China, it's unconscionable to go there without raising the issue of human rights." One can also mention workers' rights. It's unconscionable to do trade with China without raising the issue of workers' rights there.

We know that many of the products that come from China are produced in sweatshops. We know that. We don't want to compete with that in Ontario. We don't want sweatshop jobs here, and we don't want our workers to have to produce goods that compete with those kinds of wages. What we need in Ontario are good union jobs.

I think of an example: My husband and I went to Sweden, a country of nine million people—we have 13 million in Ontario, so it's comparable. Sweden is an international trading country. They have Sony Ericsson, they have H&M, they have Ikea, they have Volvo—this is a country that produces. It's also a country that looks after its citizens. Sweden is a country where you have a dental plan until age 18. Sweden is a country where 85% of the workforce is unionized—where the McDonald's workers are unionized—where, de facto, the minimum wage is just under \$12 an hour. We're asking for \$10.25 here, a paltry amount. It could be argued that you can't even live on \$10.25. What do we have instead? We have \$8.75, which you definitely cannot live on, which is definitely below the poverty line.

But in Sweden it's different. In Sweden, what do they do that we don't do here? Certainly they don't have the poverty rates we have here; certainly they don't have the child poverty rates we have here. Why don't they? Well, simple things. They have dental plans and real and absolutely comprehensive health plans. They have subsidized government daycare—not only in Sweden; they have it in

Quebec, right next door, for \$7 a day. They have subsidized universities, so that students aren't massively encumbered with debt as soon as they walk out the door with a degree. How do they do that and still produce, and still be an international trading force?

Well, one of the things they do is that they have government policies that urge Swedes to buy Swedish. Certainly, when we were over there, it seemed like every third or fourth Swede drove a Volvo. There is a reason for that. This is a government that absolutely supports their own industry and that urges and has mandates in place for those who live there to buy from the country they live in—not to buy goods produced by sweatshops in India or China. No, that's not the answer. The answer is good jobs there for them, and it should be good jobs—good union jobs—here for us, because work isn't working in Ontario. This is something this government has not addressed at all.

We remember the tale of a private member's bill that obviously got squashed by the McGuinty cabinet that was trying to do the very minimum, which was to license temporary agencies. But we need far more than just licensing temporary agencies. We need far more than that to make work, work. Here is what we need; here is a simple plan that wouldn't cost a dime in tax dollars and wouldn't affect the bottom line of the budget across the way, but would make a significant difference in the lives of workers in Ontario.

First of all, as I've said many times in this House, as I introduced a bill that was voted down by the McGuinty government, we need a living wage. What is a living wage? It's a wage that's right above the poverty line. That used to be \$10; it's now \$10.25. It should be indexed to inflation. This would help everyone. This, by definition, would take about 1.2 million people out of poverty. Right now, what we have is those working 40 hours, 60 hours—some 80 and 90 hours—a week just to pay the rent and feed the children.

We should not only license temporary agencies, but we should render any fees for applicants to temporary agencies illegal. They used to be illegal, but this government is turning a blind eye to the abuses that go on in the temporary and contract agency business. Remember that 37% of Ontarians now work in precarious employment. They work at contract jobs; they work at temporary jobs. They don't know if they will have a job next week or tomorrow or next month. We need to address that fact.

We need to immediately inspect at least 25% of all employers. Most employers never see anybody from employment standards. They never see anybody. We have millions of dollars of unpaid wages that have not been collected, because there is no recourse for workers. If you don't get your paycheque, too bad. Walk away. A worker who is unemployed doesn't have time to fight through the bureaucracy to see if they can get the money. Most often, they don't have the expertise. Sometimes they don't have the language skills, and they certainly don't have the lawyers. They also stand outside that conspicuous-consumption-fest of Sandra Pupatello and the McGuinty government flying around the world while they suffer.

We need to raise the fines for non-compliant employers once we inspect them. A slap on the wrist is not enough for an employer who hires people and doesn't pay them, or who consistently breaks employment standards. It's not good enough to slap them on the wrist with a \$500 or a \$5,000 fine. We need significant fines that will make a significant dent in their bottom line to show them that we mean business as a government and as a society.

We should insist, as they do in the European Union, on a timeline for those who are going from temporary work to permanent work. It's absolutely unconscionable that someone can work as a temporary worker year after year in the same place. We have seen this from those with PhDs to those who haven't finished high school. We've seen this with contract university teachers and professors who have doctorates and teach on contract, making way less than their full-time counterparts, and there's no redress for them. In fact, this government only just finally allowed them the right to unionize.

Of course, I want to give a nod to all those in the New Democratic caucus, and all their answers, many of which would not cost anything in tax dollars, to address the issues of the economy, of the 90% of Ontarians—the lucky ones—who work for a living in this province.

First of all we have Michael Prue, with the poverty file. He has talked time and time again about raising ODSP rates. It's unconscionable, it's egregious that if you are disabled and you cannot work, we have basically relegated you to a life of extreme hardship and poverty.

0920

We have Andrea Horwath, with her child care bills. We need child care, finally. We have been fighting for this for 40, 50 years in the women's movement, and we still don't have a government-sponsored child care program in this province like they do in Quebec, like they do in most countries in Europe.

Peter Kormos, in labour—we need card-check certification. We need to make it easy for people to unionize. Only if it's easy to unionize will people have a dignified job. We've seen this in European countries, where they have high rates of unionization and they have high rates of benefits, high rates of social services and—guess what?—stronger economies, for the most part, than we do here in Ontario.

We have Mr. Miller, with his bill to assist those who have been laid off. They should be paid first, not last, after the banks, when a company goes bankrupt.

We have France Gélinas, my benchmate here, who has talked about dental care and how, in Sweden, they were shocked to know we didn't have a dental care program, because bad teeth mean poverty.

And Peter Tabuns, with his shift to a green economy: Instead of spending \$40 billion to \$50 billion on nuclear reactors—highly expensive energy—what we need is an energy policy that's going to assist people.

So all of this is what we're asking for, in the New Democratic Party. Instead, the response from the McGuinty Liberals is to go begging, cap in hand, to the

government, where we've gone from first to worst in provinces. Even if they got their so-called fairness and transfer payments from the federal government, we're talking about \$1.3 billion. We have a \$50-billion infrastructure deficit in this province right now. As if that would make the telling difference. This is a way of really pointing the blame at someone else and not actually doing what's required to be done by the government right here and right now. They, of course, say that they have produced jobs. But when you look at the jobs, what do you see? You see half of them in the public sector; you see the other half of them, the McJobs, the temporary, contract jobs, jobs that aren't good union jobs. Our rate of unionization continues to go down, and that's the real rate of a job with dignity.

So certainly, we in the New Democrats have a number of policies, most of which would not cost a tax dime, and most of which would address the real economy of Ontario. That is the economy of 90% of working Ontarians, those in jobs and in small business, and not the 10% who are flying up there around that one-kilometre-tall glass tower in Dubai with the Minister of International Trade and Investment or opening up shameful trade agencies in countries that do not have the human rights record that we have, and certainly do not have the workers' rights record that we have. Thank you very much for a chance to speak to this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. David Ramsay: I'm very pleased to get up and contribute to this debate. It reminds me of the opening lines of the Charles Dickens novel *A Tale of Two Cities*. The line there is, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." That's what it is. This is a time of very extreme transition, of this economy really changing from the manufacturing-based economy of autos and steel and moving to green technology. We're on the cutting edge of that. Unlike the doom-and-gloom speech we heard from the previous speaker, Ontario and the McGuinty government, over the last four years, has been investing into the new economy, with programs such as our advanced manufacturing programs and our future jobs fund. We have been investing in those new jobs because that's where we want to position Ontario.

Premier McGuinty understands that the future is to become that green economy. Ontario, through this government, wants to be the leader of that new economy. So we've been investing in companies that are creating the new products, the biotech companies, the green product companies, because we have great innovation, great ingenuity in this province. So we have research and development in this province. I can't think of a jurisdiction in the world that is more prepared to make that leap into the next economy, which is the green economy. Coupled with that, what we obviously are doing is training our workers to move into that new green economy so that these green jobs are going to be available. We'll need our green workers and green-collar workers, which is one of the new phrases that is being coined when it comes to

describing what the workforce is going to look like with these new jobs. It's a very exciting possibility for us here in Ontario, and the power of the government procurement is one way we can certainly drive that.

We traditionally help companies by giving them grants and giving them loans. To get them up to scale, we certainly can start to procure or buy those high-tech products from them and start applying them to government services and buildings. So we should be looking at our office buildings and getting solar technology put on there, whether it's a solar wall to create warm air or hot water systems or photovoltaic systems to create electricity, we should be harnessing the energy of the sun, where all energy comes from, and start to utilize the technology that's being built here.

We see jurisdictions like Germany that are world leaders in this. That is the future, and Germany has done that. In fact, there was a story on the national news last night where we saw the town of Freiburg in the Black Forest region, in the southern part of Germany, looking at moving toward carbon neutrality. How are they doing that? Well, they're building homes that are very energy-efficient. They're applying all the technology that's there, and because of the growth of that market, the companies can get up to scale and start producing these new technologies in a mass way.

That's what we have to do in Ontario. That's where we are going in Ontario, to develop this new green economy. We want to be the North American leader and then the world leader in this. Not only are we going to need that here in our North American market, we're also going to be world exporters on this, because all the other jurisdictions in the world are going to have to catch up. In this new green economy, it's a tremendous business opportunity to consume and emit less carbon. Businesses are looking at this and they are starting to move, probably in some cases faster than governments, and are starting to reduce their carbon needs. Basically what you're talking about is the decline of energy consumption, and so through the employment of new technology, we can do this.

One of the interesting ideas that people are talking about is what's called an energy Internet. We know how the Internet started: In the United States, university professors wanted to link up their computers across the country. Well, we can start to connect our smart appliances together so that they can talk together within a house or a business, but not only that, to communicate back to the utility. When the price of electricity is high, the signal goes to the home and then the appliances, the hot water heater, and those things start to shut down in the middle of the day when we have peak power demand. So when we have these smart appliances and a smart system, our utilities can manage the distribution of electricity better. We don't have to build for peak and we don't have to be always just concentrating on the supply side, but more on the demand side. So we have to just work smarter.

That's why the McGuinty government is positioning Ontario to be that world leader. That's where we're

going. So it's important for our trade minister to be travelling to other countries, saying to the world that Ontario is open for business, that we are a world-class jurisdiction, and that we want them to come and invest in Ontario. That creates jobs. The previous speaker sort of belittled that. But look what's going on in Woodstock right now with the Toyota plant near the end of its construction phase and how it acted as a magnet for all these other businesses, small businesses, that are going to avail themselves of the opportunity of having this assembly plant there. It spawns a lot of small business in that area. There's great prosperity in that area because it was this government that attracted that anchor industry. At that time, it was the previous minister, Joe Cordiano, going over to Japan and talking to the Toyota people about how open Ontario was to this investment. So these jobs are there. There's been a mass of construction jobs, and Toyota is hiring their assembly workers as we speak now. That just bodes so well for that particular part of southwestern Ontario. It's not just Woodstock, but it stretches from Kitchener–Waterloo down to London, that whole area where workers are starting to move in, are starting to create new businesses. That's the type of thing that our trade minister is doing: talking to the major corporations, telling them Ontario is open for business and, through that, those anchor industries coming into Ontario, creating a lot of work for small business and also direct employment.

0930

I would like to talk about some of the progress that some of the sectors are making in Ontario. I was very familiar, in my last assignment as Minister of Natural Resources, with the need to help the forestry industry reinvest in itself to become that new, green industry. Right now, today, across the country, forestry is about 60% carbon-neutral. They are moving off of fossil fuels and using forestry waste for much of their energy needs, and in another four years they will be carbon-neutral. They will use all their waste products to create heat for their sawmills and their various manufacturing operations, whether it's creating paper, oriented strand board, or some of the new products that are being invented. We are constantly working with the forestry industry, giving them financial support to retool at this time to be the new industry of the future.

It is a green industry and it's getting greener and greener, and these have been very tough times for that industry. Coming from northern Ontario, I certainly appreciate how challenging it has been. So we're working with our workforce up there and we're retraining for those new jobs, training forestry workers for mining jobs, because those are the boom jobs that are happening right now in centres such as Timmins and Sudbury, where mining is doing very, very well. We are in a period of adjustment and it's the McGuinty government that is here helping those companies make that adjustment, helping our workers and families make that adjustment. That is the future, and I'm glad to be part of a government that is with its province, with its workers and with

its families to make sure we can make that transition into that new economy and make sure that Ontario remains the most prosperous jurisdiction in North America.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: It gives me pleasure to rise in this Legislature today to speak to Premier McGuinty's motion on the economy—not so much pleasure, however, when looking at the economy itself. Because it seems to me that in debating a motion like this, the McGuinty Liberals are not so much seeking collaboration from this Legislature—would that they were—as they are looking for absolution, and I don't have that power. Nobody here has that power.

I actually wish that this debate could really put aside partisanship and that we could all get together and do what we're here to do, because this discussion is about the economic health of Ontario and there is no debate on why each and every one of us was sent by our constituents to this chamber, which is to see to things that are as basic and as essential as the economic health of this province.

But this motion appears to want to underscore the good economic stewardship of the McGuinty government. I can't support the idea that there has been, to date, good economic stewardship by this government. If it were that good, I don't believe that the two opposition parties on this side of the House would have spent the majority of question period since I've been here, which is a year, and long before that as I've been a student of this Legislature, with questions in question period that pertain to an economy that is undeniably in decline, and admittedly on the part of the Premier in decline.

The McGuinty Liberals have essentially made a mess of the economy, and they are about to make a bigger mess of Ontario's finances. That concerns us, and it should concern every Ontarian. Don't ask in a motion, effectively, "Are we doing a job that is good, or is it better, or is it really fantastic?" Ask if we on this side of the aisle could actually have some ideas that would assist. Both opposition parties have put forward amendments to this motion, and they are serious outreach ideas on the part of both the Progressive Conservatives and the NDP. Our caucus will not support the motion as originally worded, and the NDP caucus has already also proposed an amendment. We congratulate them for their efforts, but we cannot support that either at this point. Right now, we fear that where we're headed in this province is for a deficit. We fear further hardship for beleaguered Ontarians and we're looking for ways to reach across and stop this because this is, and I say it again, about the health of Ontario and, therefore, the health of its citizens.

The government is trying to bully this motion through the Legislature. At the end of the day, this motion will pass because there are 71 people on that side and they'll vote as a bloc. I appeal to you, all of you on the other side, to give that some careful thought, because there are constituents back there for all of us who expect more.

What they'll say is that we did not stand up for Ontario. You hear it in this Legislature every day: that we did not stand up for Ontario. But it's not true. They'll keep talking about fairness when, in fact, after talking about fairness incessantly and launching a website, what they got was a scant 15,000 signatures on a website that was supposed to support a concept that there's an unfairness inherent in the system, in Ottawa's treatment of Ontario. For goodness' sake, we got 50,000 signatures from people who wanted the Lord's Prayer continued here—but let's not go there.

The government will whip all Liberal MPPs to vote in favour of the motion, and that's getting pretty tired. All of the backbenchers over there: You want to be re-elected too. It's not about being re-elected; it's about doing the right thing. Maybe it's time to break ranks. I debate in this House with a fair amount of frequency, and my constituents like the fact that I do that, because at least I put some ideas on the table, and I would like to think that every single one of you, as colleagues, does the same thing. Do yours endorse what you're doing? Do your constituents endorse what you're doing, as jobs disappear and as your kids go elsewhere?

Premier McGuinty, having recited his litany of possible excuses for Ontario's economic woes, is, with this motion, holding his hands up and saying, "Mr. Speaker, it wasn't me. It was globalization, it was the US dollar"—I guess that one's gone for a while—"it was the US government or it was maybe" our "government five years ago. It was Ottawa." Maybe it was the man in the moon. McGuinty is kind of like an ill-prepared student in class who blames his failing grade on the teacher. Some of his reasoning, in looking at these various aspects of why our economy is in the shape it is, has merit; there is no question, and I wouldn't argue that. But a lot doesn't. A lot of it is responsibility that rests with the government of the day, and for five years, the McGuinty government has been the government of the day and we've been raising red flags on the other side of this House, saying, "Look, the problems are coming." And, "No. It's a five-point plan, it's a five-point plan, and by the way, it's a five-point plan"—those are the answers that we get.

Perhaps it has not occurred to Premier McGuinty that, outside of photo opportunities, he may actually have to weather an economic storm by preparing Ontario to handle the worst of the waves. If you sail the seas—or, like me, you fly an airplane—you have to know where you're going; you have to know what the weather is like at the other end; you have to prepare for the worst. You cannot quote a five-point plan once you're flying in the middle of that storm. Failure to prepare the province for what we warned and what the experts warned was coming is, and was, negligent at best and incompetent at worst.

Can we address some of this together? We could. But will we? The greatest character flaw is the Liberal government grabbing at straws to explain the situation. They blamed the US; they blamed Ottawa; they blamed transfer payments. As I've said, Dalton McGuinty did every-

thing but examine his own spending-like-it's-going-out-of-style, job-crushing policies, and now they want us to agree that whatever they've been doing so far has been working. How can we do that? How can the Liberal backbenchers go to their constituents and justify passing this motion? We certainly can't. Ontario is at the unfavourable end of a bell curve right now, compared to the rest of Canada. We're not on the right heading. Can we not change course? That's the question. Can we do that now? I would have hoped that a full debate lasting five days in this Legislature would result in an ability to come together and do something about changing course.

0940

For the first time in 30 years, unemployment rates in Ontario are above the national average. They rose to 6.5% in December 2007, and remain above average and are forecasted to stay there throughout 2009. So we do have the same troubles as everyone else, and we have our homegrown ones, and it's those that we can address. Inflation rose to 2.8% in June compared to 1.8% in May. What does that tell you? The simple answer—well, it was gas prices. It doesn't change the fact that people have to put their hands in their pockets and pay for this stuff. You can't take a tax-and-spend approach when people just don't have the money to pay.

Two hundred and four thousand manufacturing jobs have been lost since 2005. Banks are tightening their purse strings. The average Ontarian is justifiably worried. There's not one of us in this chamber who hasn't been in the home riding who hasn't been approached; who hasn't, sitting in his or her office here, received e-mails and letters saying, "What am I supposed to do?" There are no easy answers, and I wish I had them to give. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business says that credit concerns are accelerating—accelerating, indeed. Pension plans have taken the biggest hit in decades, and no, it's not necessarily the fault of the McGuinty government that this has happened but it is the responsibility of the McGuinty government to help address it, because when dollars disappear on a personal level, taxes can't continue to be taken at the same rate.

Our seniors, whom I have particularly sought to assist, are really scared. Is that what you want? Certainly not I. If I were on a fixed income—and I'm probably going to be 10 years from now—and I was withdrawing on a regular basis some amount that I had determined was necessary to cover my living expenses, my needs, and I saw a great big hunk taken away from the pool, I'd wonder how long I could continue to live at that particular level as I continued to grow old. Then I'd start to wonder about when it was I was going to die, and that's what's going on in the homes of many seniors now and that's why we're talking about what is not, in effect, but is a de facto economic crisis.

Jobs have packed up and they've moved out of Ontario. Volvo moved from Goderich to Pennsylvania and took 500 jobs with them. In my own riding of Thornhill, a residential riding, 3,000 jobs disappeared in the last six months. Three thousand jobs in Thornhill? If any of you

have not visited Thornhill, let me describe it very simply: a bedroom community. It's just houses and apartment buildings. We don't have very much industry, so when 3,000 jobs go, you're talking about a very significant percentage, and that is just my riding. They moved because they needed a more competitive environment. They needed a preferential tax structure. They needed cheaper energy. They needed workers readily available. We have the workers. We need the training for those workers so that they can adjust to today's economy, and the McGuinty government continues to tell us that the programs exist. But they don't, not in sufficient numbers and not geared properly. John Deere took 800 from its Welland plant and moved operations to Mexico and to Wisconsin. We've now heard about Daimler's truck facility closing in St. Thomas.

Ontario has gained only 700 full-time jobs since the last provincial election back in 2007, yet Dalton McGuinty wants us to say that he has done right by this province. Come on, let's not politicize people's well-being. We are in this chamber together to solve problems. We're all standing up and providing, yes, some criticism, but the criticism, I hope, is constructive and my constructive criticism is: Let's take the bull by the horns here and let's understand that you can't keep stonewalling. You've got to say there are people here with other ideas. We come together, three parties and one independent, because we have ideas that are not particularly the same. They're divergent. But when you take them together and you put them in the blender you should come up with something that works, so don't stonewall. Let's try to get there together.

Sitting on the sidelines, waiting for things to get better, is not the right thing to do and it's not what's going to work ultimately in solving these serious problems for Ontario and for its citizens. Increasing taxes, overburdening Ontarians and Ontario businesses to support the Liberal spending addiction is not the right thing to do. Hiring record numbers of government employees at the taxpayers' expense, and particularly now, is not the right way to manage the public purse.

Some 90% of whatever new jobs were recorded are concentrated in only two sectors: government and construction—public expenditures. Dalton McGuinty won't let Ontarians keep their money in their pockets, but seems to believe that he can treat it as if it were his own. At this point, that is an inappropriate approach to how to solve the problems of Ontario.

Since last year's election, public sector or government job growth is 3.4 times that of the private sector. The private sector grew by a scant 1%. The remaining job creation is all public sector, and we use that phrase a lot for those watching us on television—that means government. Do we need more government workers? Uninhibited government spending and job-crushing regulation are not the way to stimulate the economy. Taking more of Ontarians' hard-earned money, and notably now, from their pockets, is a method that has failed in the past, is failing Ontario now, and that is an approach that will

always fail. Instead of using high revenues to reduce the tax burden and provide relief for struggling families and businesses, Liberals are saddling future generations with growing debt. The money is just not out there. It would be, but you've got to spend money to make money, something that I learned, sometimes the hard way, when I was in small business myself. We're talking about stimulating small business, because small business really drives what we do here in Canada and here in Ontario.

For the sake of a correct perspective: McGuinty Liberals have increased government spending in five years by as much as the NDP government of Bob Rae and the Harris-Eves governments combined did over a decade. That is an absolutely astounding multiple. Liberals increased program spending by nearly 50% in five years. They thought, "The programs were needed; let's just say okay." But if so, did the revenue side create the ability to derive the funds? The answer is clear cut, and it is a no.

Liberal Premier David Peterson set records by increasing government spending by 45% in five years. That was the prior record—45% in five years. Clearly, the McGuinty team has chosen to follow in those footsteps and it didn't work for Peterson, so I have to ask the question: Why would it work now?

What fiscal policies are the Liberals following? Those that earned Ontario the dubious title of honorary member of the Third World due to its debt and spending habits? What exactly has been so successful about the so-called five-point plan that Premier McGuinty has implemented? That it deserves the support of the members of this House? The five-point plan that we all hear about every day: Rather than playing it back over and over and over, can anyone demonstrate its efficacy? Can anyone demonstrate its efficiency? I can't decide if it's the lost retirement savings or the lost jobs; is it the spiralling real estate market with a 27% decline in housing starts in July or the small businesses going out of business? Is it the rising inflation or is it the drop in trade?

The value of Ontario exports fell by 12.9% in the first half of this year compared to the same period in 2007. We are not in the business, in Ontario, of making things for ourselves as much as we manufacture things for others. We make things in our manufacturing sector. We sell them and we sell them outside. A 12.9% drop is significant, to say the least. But you know, we're taking hits like everyone else and this trend is long-term. It has to be reversed. Is the rising unemployment rate or the 7.5% drop in manufacturing sales in the first half of this year also to blame? What does it say about the governing abilities of this Liberal government when iconic Canadian companies like Gibbard Furniture Shops closed down? Gibbard Furniture Shops Ltd. survived two major fires and the Great Depression but it couldn't survive five years of Liberal government.

0950

Small business is our economic backbone in Ontario. I spent 15 years as an owner-operator. Anybody listening to me who is in small business or has been in small business knows what I mean when I say, "the 5 o'clock

sweats.” That’s waking up at 5 o’clock in the morning in a cold sweat and wondering what you’re going to do today to stem the tide that’s taking your business away from you and that’s bringing you closer and closer to giving a bunch of pink slips to good people who have supported you and supported themselves well over many years.

What has this government done to make Canadian businesses competitive in a globalizing market that they admit is indeed just that? Retooling, retraining and economic redevelopment are not exercises. This is about people. It’s about their livelihoods, it’s about their kids and it’s about their futures. How has this government made it easier for quality Ontario companies to compete on the international stage? How has the McGuinty government “planned” to empower Ontario’s trademark companies to weather this economic storm? It hasn’t, and that’s why workers are leaving, my own two kids included, one by one. I guess the Premier had better set aside some more time for interviews, because there will be a lot of Ontarians needing jobs before this is all over. So far, his only solution has been to hire employees, rather than create the environment where Ontarians can find well-paying jobs. Governments of all stripes in decades past got it; now we seem to have lost it.

How have they failed? Let me count the ways: insufficient margin of error for their budgets—they had to spend it to the limit and we’re seeing the result. What’s the status of the reserve? It’s \$750 million in 2008-09, \$1 billion for 2009-10, in terms of balancing the budgets. They didn’t look ahead enough to anticipate possible operating cost increases, like the jump in oil prices since the March 2008 budget.

I have a few seconds left, so I’ll end the way I began. Let’s try to make this more than an exercise. I’ve just thrown some food for thought into this debate, as all members are. Let’s see if we can find a way to get ourselves out of the hole that keeps on being dug.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to rise and talk about the motion that was introduced last Wednesday by the Premier. Basically, this resolution finally acknowledges that Ontario is facing a serious crisis. I quote from the motion. The first line reads: “That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario acknowledges our province faces economic challenges.” The McGuinty government has ignored the threat of a recession for some time now. Last December, when delivering his fall economic statement, the finance minister said, “The fundamentals of our economy are vital and strong.” March—here we go again. Last spring, when the asset-backed commercial paper mess was beginning to unravel and bank economists were lowering their expectations, the finance minister of Ontario stated: “The economy is fundamentally strong and resilient.”

It goes on. The McGuinty government chose to ignore these looming problems and instead chose to use terms like “resilient” and “fundamentally strong” to get around

debating what could be done to reverse the course. Well, “economics” and “strong fundamentals” are nice words, but when Ontarians are looking at the stock market, they are nervous. They have a sense of angst. We know that stock markets go up and down, but what’s going on right now is different. It seems that every day, the world central banks take extraordinary actions to prevent the financial system from completely collapsing. The Federal Reserve and the Bank of Canada have been pouring billions of dollars into the banking system to keep it afloat. In the United States and European countries, they have made commitments of trillions of dollars. This is a lot of zeroes. I’ve never seen a trillion dollars before, and most of us never will, but this is the size of the commitment that is needed to save the banking system in the States. They are nationalizing financial institutions in a desperate attempt to turn things around.

The stock market swings. We all know this. It is wild, it is unpredictable and seemingly irrational, but those swings worry people. Ontarians’ savings are tied to the stock market. Whether we talk about our pension funds, mutual funds or retirement savings funds and so on, Ontarians are worried about their financial future, and they want their savings protected from these wild swings.

They are also concerned about their jobs. Stock market crashes and job losses tend to go hand in hand. We’ve already seen 230,000 manufacturing job losses in this province in the last five years, but Ontarians are concerned that the worst is yet to come. It could be way worse than 230,000 jobs lost. The financial and retail sectors here have so far been relatively unscathed by the lower growth. In the US, this has not been the case. Retailers and banks are laying off workers.

When Ontarians look to newspapers and television for reasons that the stock market has been acting this way, they are inundated by terms like “asset-backed commercial paper,” “toxic mortgages,” “default credit swaps.” It is a complicated problem, but all signs point to a lack of regulation and oversight, which allows speculators to take excessive risk, and everyday taxpayers and citizens are now paying the consequences of those bad debts, I would call them.

Ontario has jurisdiction over securities regulation. We have argued through this debate that Ontario needs to take a more active approach in protecting and sustaining good jobs. Ontario also needs to take immediate steps to strengthen securities regulation. We need to prevent this from happening ever again.

We would like to offer a few solutions on securities reform. First, create a financial product safety commission, just like we have for consumer goods, as recommended by an economist. This would address the invention of new financial products that are not intended to manage risk, but those products are actually there to create risk. Second, ensure that regulators oversee areas of financials that are now unregulated. I like the quote from one economist who says that if it quacks like a bank, then you should regulate it like a bank. This includes real regulation for hedge funds and large pools of

capital that are able to manipulate markets for quick profit, therefore bringing those huge swings. Strengthen regulation that restricts leverage for all financial companies. Leverage is the portion of debt used in speculation and was one of the causes of the current crisis that we see. Deal with the conflicts of interest that are so much a part of our securities regulation system.

Organizations that regulate the mutual funds and investment dealer sectors police themselves, while also acting as a trade association in promoting themselves. This is a clear conflict of interest, and it has to stop. We've seen what self-regulation has done in other industries. Should I remind everybody of the big bang in a part of Toronto where the people were self-regulating the propane?

Obviously, these are just a few proposals, and we look forward to hearing more from the province and its Ontario Securities Commission, but we need to act now. We need to protect Ontarians' savings from more wild swings and we need to protect their jobs—the jobs that are being impacted by financial markets.

1000

The manufacturing and research sector workers in this province have been witness to a recession for quite a few years now. They know that the economy in their community has not been fundamentally strong, like our Minister of Finance led us to believe. There's job crisis in Ontario's manufacturing and forestry heartland.

Since July of 2004, almost 230,000 Ontarians in the manufacturing sector have lost their jobs. That's a lot of people. Here are some examples: 430 jobs—that is 80% of their workforce—at DDM Plastics in Tillsonburg. In Niagara, 800 jobs were lost at John Deere in Welland, and a temporary layoff of 480 people at AbitibiBowater. Lost since June of 2004 are 100,000 manufacturing jobs right here in Toronto and 25,000 in Hamilton; as well, half of all of the manufacturing jobs in Thunder Bay have been lost. In addition to the 230,000 job losses in the manufacturing sector, there are more than 90,000 direct jobs in forest products; about 30,000 indirect jobs have already been lost.

I come from northern Ontario. If you look in parts of my riding where forestry used to be active, it has now collapsed. When we go around our riding, we can see all of the men and women who used to work in the forest and owned their own tools, trucks, equipment to do forestry work—it is now parked in the back of their yard collecting dust and rusting. This is not what I want for northern Ontario; this is not what I want for forestry.

I shouldn't have to tell people opposite how important manufacturing and resource jobs are to this province. These jobs are not just important because manufacturing jobs pay an average \$2.50 more than the average hourly wage in Ontario; these jobs are not just important because, in addition to paying better wages, they come with good pensions and they come with good benefits. They used to come with security that allowed people to go on with their lives. Workers who have lost those good jobs over the past few years would be stunned to know that it

is only now that the McGuinty government is proposing a resolution acknowledging that, as I read at the beginning, the province faces significant economic challenges.

It is shocking, frankly, that it has taken the government of McGuinty so long to come to this conclusion. The good people in my riding have known this for many years now, since the equipment has been parked in the back of their yard, collecting dust and rust. Dalton McGuinty has pretended that the current job crisis is limited only to manufacturing and forestry, although they have been hard hit, but anyone who knows anything about the Ontario economy knows that manufacturing and resources represent the foundation on which Ontario's service economy rests.

The second-quarter economic accounts released by the Minister of Finance last week or the week before show that output from the manufacturing sector continues to decline. But the real news is that when you combine the reports from the first two quarters of this year, it becomes clear that the rest of the economy is no longer picking up the slack. We're ending up with declining output in many more sectors of the broader economy. In other words, job losses in previously what we used to call untouched sectors, like retail and financial services, may well be on the immediate horizon.

The TD Economics report last Tuesday forecast negative employment growth for 2009 for this province. The report reads, "Real GDP growth in Ontario is expected to barely advance in 2008 and 2009, placing it last amongst its peers." Dead last. "The lagging nature of employment in reflecting economic conditions leaves significant downside risks to the job market, especially since the manufacturing sector is expected to continue to bleed jobs and this will disproportionately hit" our "province."

The McGuinty government has heard from unemployed workers, seen the bad statistics and read report after report forecasting mega job losses. Now they acknowledge that trouble is on the horizon. What are they going to do about it? They have tabled a resolution reaffirming that their so-called five-point plan is working.

When confronted with real evidence that the plan is in fact not working, the McGuinty government's strategy is to proclaim in this House that it is actually working. Two hundred and twenty thousand manufacturing jobs have been lost in five years. "The plan is working." The forestry sector decline is wiping out towns in northern Ontario. "Don't worry. The plan is working." Reports show falling growth and serious job losses looming in other sectors. "Don't worry about that either. Our five-point plan is working." This resolution is a declaration of inaction.

The NDP has always been the party that puts working families first. We believe in a good job for everyone, because a good job is the best way to make sure that working women and men in this province share in the prosperity.

The NDP believes that government has a job to play: an active role in protecting good-paying jobs and, when those jobs can't be saved, in making sure that workers who have committed a lifetime to an employer are treated

fairly and are given every opportunity to return to the labour force in comparable jobs.

The McGuinty government doesn't believe in an activist government. They have stood on the sidelines, showing absolutely no leadership, while factories and mills downsize and close, costing hundreds of thousands of workers their jobs. I repeat: 230,000 manufacturing jobs lost under McGuinty's watch. This is devastating. Tens of thousands of direct and indirect forestry jobs have disappeared on Dalton McGuinty's watch because, quite frankly, Liberals think that markets must always be the final arbiter of which jobs survive and which jobs disappear.

I'm here to tell you that the NDP doesn't see things that way. We believe that sometimes the market does work, but sometimes it doesn't. When it doesn't—and this is one of those times in Ontario's economic history when the market definitively is not working for the people of Ontario—then the government must step in on behalf of hard-working men and women of this province and set things right.

There are fundamental changes in the economy taking place that require innovative, activist government action now. Instead of putting real proposals on the table, McGuinty tables a resolution in this House saying that he is prepared to act to protect jobs in this province. He says that his five-point plan will support Ontario's workers through the gloomy economic forecast we hear about every day. But his five-point plan has failed to sustain manufacturing and resource jobs, so it sure won't do a thing to support jobs in other sectors that are next in line to get hit.

The NDP has tabled amendments to this resolution. We want a five-year guarantee of an industrial hydro rate so that Ontario manufacturing and resource companies can count on stable, competitive hydro policies at a time when competing jurisdictions have far lower industrial rates.

Second, we want a job protection commissioner to help at-risk companies overcome financial difficulty, with the goal of saving jobs. The commissioner will work with all parties to help out and save jobs.

We want a Buy Ontario policy that would ensure that streetcars, subways and buses continue to be made right here in Ontario, resulting in the protection of thousands of good-paying jobs for the people who build the parts and assemble those streetcars, buses and subways.

We want tougher plant closure legislation that would ensure that everything is done to prevent a profitable plant or mill from closing and, in addition, an enhanced mandated severance. When you look at those 230,000 jobs, a lot of them were in plants and in mills that were profitable right here in Ontario. Those companies were profitable, but it was in Ontario that it was the easiest to close them down, to move them elsewhere, motivated by greed and profit. They had no ties to Ontario. They had no ties to keep the people of Ontario's jobs. They moved them away for greed. Tougher plant closure legislation

would ensure that everything is done to prevent this from happening again.

We also want expansion of severance eligibility and an increase in advance notice in mass layoff situations.

We want pension and wage protection that would make sure that workers get every penny they are owed from their employers when their company becomes insolvent or goes bankrupt. The workers should be first in line to get paid.

And finally: a refundable manufacturing and resource investment tax credit that would provide a real incentive for manufacturers and processors to invest in the building, equipment and machinery that leads to high-quality, good-paying jobs.

Those are just some of the constructive ideas we've put forward in our amendment. We are willing to talk about them one at a time and split the amendments if the government is really committed in saying that they want a dialogue to address what they call the economic challenges that the province is facing. If they want a dialogue, then have a look at the motion that we've put forward, have a look at every single one of those ideas, and let's discuss them. Let's break up the motion and take it one point at a time so that the opposition has a chance to influence the policies that will make sure that the serious economic crisis that Ontario is going through will be addressed in a constructive way by all members of this House.

We look forward to this debate and hope that some of our points will be heard by this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Pursuant to standing order 9(b), the debate is adjourned.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): This House stands in recess until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1012 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'd like just to take a minute to introduce Jeff Neven, who is from my area. He has an interest in non-profit housing and is doing a field placement out of Wilfrid Laurier University with my office. Welcome, Jeff.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I would like to stand up and introduce my friend and constituent Kathleen Keating from London. She's a social activist and community worker in the city of London.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome.

With the new standing orders and introduction of guests, if the pages' members are not here, my intent is to introduce the pages' guests, and I will be continuing to introduce guests in the Speaker's gallery, but that will be the extent of the Speaker's introductions.

First, we'd like to welcome to the Speaker's gallery today the 2008-09 legislative interns: Tejas Aivalli—and joining him today is his mother, Suma, his father, Vijay, and his sister Gitanjali; we welcome them—Meghan

Buckham; Igor Delov; David Donovan; Angela Hersey; Kim Hohan; Waqas Iqbal; Chelsea Peet; Emma Stanley-Cochrane—joining Emma today are her father, Michael, and her mother, Marilyn Stanley—and Rosanne Waters. Would all members please join me in welcoming our interns.

As well, on behalf of page Jasmine Douglas, her mother, Lesley, and her father, Martin—they'll be sitting in the public galleries today; on behalf of page Michael Ralphs, his mother, Joan; and on behalf of page Timothy Fuke, his mother, Oksana Fuke, and his aunt Sonia Solomon in the east public gallery. Welcome today as well.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just want to take this opportunity to ask all members to join me in saying thank you to our pages. Today is their last day of service here at Queen's Park. We thank you for everything you have done and we wish you all the best in your future endeavours.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My first question is for the Premier and it has to do with his government's economic planning. On top of watching their savings suffer a daily beating on the financial markets over the last few weeks, today Ontarians woke up to learn that they're going to have to pay an additional 12% for hydro. You're asking people to tighten their belts and find savings; at the same time you're asking them to pay this whopping increase in their hydro bills. You and your colleagues have created this mess and now you're asking taxpayers to clean it up for you. Premier, what are you going to do to take responsibility for what you've created and what relief will you provide to struggling families in next week's economic statement?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

Hon. George Smitherman: I want to say in response to the question by the honourable member that the information that he puts forward is not accurate. The people of the province of Ontario will not be experiencing rate increases at the level that the honourable member has speculated. A typical user of electricity in the province of Ontario, around 1,000 kilowatt hours a month, would experience an increase of about \$2.40. We don't minimize that that has an impact for individuals. That's why we've been working aggressively through local distribution companies to assist people to lower their energy use through conservation initiatives. This is part and parcel of a renaissance of the energy system which sees a wide array of new providers being brought into the mix with

cleaner, greener fuels—part of the investment in creating jobs and part of the investment that they did not have the courage to make.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I think most hard-working Ontarians and seniors who are worried about their pensions wouldn't call this a renaissance; they'd call it a kick in the shins while times are tough and challenging. This massive hydro increase today comes on the heels of the tax hikes that families and seniors are facing because of spikes in their property assessments. We know that tax increases are going to flow from that.

Again, this government is asking people to review their budgets and find savings while at the same time finding extra money to pay for increased hydro and increased property taxes. You knew, or at least should have known, months ago that the freeze on property assessments would end at the same time an economic downturn would hit Ontario. We were already in it last spring. You've allowed Ontarians to be hit by this double whammy just when they can afford it the least. You've allowed struggling businesses to have their costs go even higher just when their jobs are in jeopardy. What are you going to do to get us out of this mess that you have created?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Jim Watson: Well, I find it a little rich coming from that side of the House talking about a mess created out of the property assessments.

Interjection.

Hon. Jim Watson: Let me quote the honourable member who is heckling me. From the St. Catharines Standard: Hudak acknowledged the problem as "an unexpected result of the legislation his fellow Conservatives pushed through under then-Premier Mike Harris." That's number one. Secondly, the member from Renfrew: Asked if the former government under Mike Harris bungled the property evaluation system, Yakabuski said, "Apparently so."

We understand the challenges when it comes to the property assessment system. We've implemented all of the recommendations of the Ombudsman, number one. The Ombudsman has praised this government for taking decisive action. Your government took eight kicks at the can and made a mess of the system. We fixed your problems.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Boy, have you fixed it. What a feeble and embarrassing response. You've got a double whammy of property tax and hydro increases, which smacks of either really poor planning or a government that just doesn't care about what struggling families in this province are going through today.

The finance minister said this morning that he plans to consult widely and involve as many people as possible in decision-making going forward. Well, given the mess that he's put Ontario families in today with this double whammy, he's clearly going to need it. So will the Pre-

mier come forward—I would like to see him do it today—and support our idea for a select committee on the economy involving all parties in a non-partisan approach to these challenges, consult widely, and develop an economic recovery plan that involves every member of this Legislature? Are you going to stand up today and say, “I will do just that”?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Jim Watson: To the Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I like the idea, and that's why we are in effect doing that. There is a Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. That committee will travel, as recommended by my colleague. That committee has all-party representation. That committee will report to this House. And the fundamental responsibility of that committee is to seek out new ideas and to consult Ontarians. So such a committee does exist, such a committee will shortly begin its work, and such a committee will take advantage of all ideas put forward by the people of Ontario.

But let me say this: We are beyond any shadow of a doubt in challenging economic times, and we will do as a government what Ontario families do in their homes. We will carefully assess our options, we will protect those priorities that are important for all of us, and we will move forward in a way that is prudent, thoughtful and responsible. And if necessary, we will delay the implementation of new programs and new initiatives.

1040

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Again to the Premier: We know that the partisan nature of standing committees in this Legislature has been shameful, from a Premier who said he was going to change the way that committees worked in this Legislature. They are simply there to echo the directions given by the Premier's office.

I want to ask the Premier again about his plea to Ontarians to review their budgets, tighten their belts and find savings. Premier, you've increased the number of public sector jobs by 43,000 just in the last year. All those jobs have to be paid for by taxpayer dollars, which we know this government has less and less of. Premier, if people are having to tighten their budgets, what are you doing to tighten your spending on public sector jobs? Will next week's economic statement include a hiring and wage freeze in the public sector?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know this is a recurring theme coming from my Conservative colleagues. They say that we should not have hired more nurses; we should not have hired more teachers; we should not have hired those additional water inspectors, those additional meat inspectors, those additional police officers. We see that as part of our responsibility to deliver to the people of Ontario good-quality public services. We feel that our families have a right to be able to count on those kinds of services being there for them. So no, we will not

apologize for making those investments in those services which families have a right to be able to count on.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I guess I'd suggest a huge deficit and a ballooning debt for future generations of Ontarians.

Just as families are being asked by the Premier to trim their budgets, the Prime Minister has announced that he will be conducting a review of each and every ministry to find efficiencies in savings. You said in your last budget that you'd find a billion dollars in savings to balance the budget. We've seen no evidence of that so far; we've asked the Minister of Finance.

Premier, are you prepared to lead by example, look to your own House before you ask Ontarians to trim their own household budgets and pay for whopping hydro and property tax increases? Will you commit to reviewing each ministry's budget to find efficiencies in savings and point them out to us in next week's economic statement?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to assure my honourable colleague that this is part of an ongoing effort on the part of our government. Those kinds of savings and demonstrations of restraint have been made in the past, and I fully expect that they'll be made again in the future.

A couple of facts when it comes to Ontario and public servants: We have the lowest number of public service employees per capita in the country; that's a fact. We have, according to independent, outside sources, the second-most efficient public service in the country. It's a fact that we're running it at 34% better, in terms of cost, than the average here in Canada. So again, there's always a responsibility on all of us to look for savings and to demonstrate restraint, but from an objective perspective I think we're doing fairly well in comparison to the rest of the country.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: According to statistics, Ontario has hired more public sector employees in the last year than all other provinces combined. That certainly shows a lack of foresight.

Premier, we warned this government about its bloated public sector last April when the sunshine list showed a 27% increase in the number of public sector employees earning over \$100,000 a year. They won't be the people struggling to pay a 12% increase in their hydro bills or a 20% jump in their property taxes; it's the average Ontario family, worried about their jobs, their mortgages, their savings; seniors worried about their pensions. That's what your government should be focusing on.

To the Premier: I want to ask him, will you again strike a select committee on the economy, a non-partisan committee, that will work with all members of this House to find solutions to the mess that you and your government colleagues have created?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I can't agree with the honourable member in terms of his characterization of the source of the challenge before Ontarians, Canadians, and the western world. I think that Ontarians would

understand that there are some pretty powerful, global economic winds that are blowing out there.

My friend opposite tells us again that he's unhappy with the investments we made in more public servants and he says in particular he's concerned about seniors. Well, I think seniors would be unhappy to learn about any decision on our part to lay off nurses as my friend would suggest. I don't think they would want to us lay off MRI and CT technologists. They wouldn't want to us to lay off personal support workers in our long-term-care homes. They would not want us to lay off home care workers. They would not want us to lay off public health unit inspectors—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier. New question.

MANUFACTURING AND FORESTRY SECTOR JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Premier. Despite the fact that the McGuinty government repeats over and over again that it has a five-point plan to sustain jobs in Ontario, the track record is very sad: 230,000 manufacturing jobs gone, 40,000 direct and indirect forest sector jobs gone, while the government continues to talk.

New Democrats have put forward seven proposals to help sustain jobs and help workers in Ontario. A reasonable industrial hydro rate, refundable manufacturing investment tax credit, tougher plant closure legislation and better severance provisions are just a few of the solutions we've offered.

Will the Premier commit in next week's fall economic statement to implementing some of these solutions which we've offered to help sustain jobs in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We are open to thoughtful proposals put forward from any corner, regardless of political stripe. We will give due consideration to any proposal which we believe will provide support to the Ontario economy and to our families in particular.

Again, I just can't agree with my friend's characterization that somehow these job losses—and they are real, and they weigh heavily on families, obviously, that have been caught up in this economic dislocation—flow exclusively from policies put forward by our government. Again, I believe Ontario families would agree with me in that regard.

But the point I want to make is that we are very much open to any thoughtful proposals that will help our families get through this challenging economic time.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: Well, the Premier has used this language of "very much open" before. When my colleague from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek put forward the idea of better severance provisions, the Premier said, "We're open to this," but three months later when asked the direct question, he said, "No, we're not going to do this." So we've heard this language of "We're open to."

What I'm asking for—and I'm going to be very clear on this—is a commitment on the part of the McGuinty government to actually start doing something to help sustain jobs in this province and help workers who have lost their jobs. Just for example, the Premier continues to talk, but while he's talking, 1,300 more workers are out of a job in St. Thomas, 800 more workers out of a job in Welland, 500 more workers out of a job in Goderich, with more to follow.

I ask the Premier again: Will you commit to implementing some of these measures which I have put forward in the economic—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The commitment that I've made is to carefully consider any thoughtful proposals that we think will work for Ontario families. What the leader of the NDP is suggesting is that I exchange my plan for his. I'm not prepared to do that.

Just to remind him about some of the reality of this place, I think it was just last week the Minister of Finance rose beside me and thanked the member for Beaches—East York for proposals that he has put forward with respect to changing our tax treatment of granny flats. The member from Beaches—East York was right, we've adopted his approach, and we've made the change accordingly.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Howard Hampton: What does that have to do with the thousands of good jobs that are being destroyed across Ontario while the McGuinty government talks about their 15,000-name electronic petition?

We're talking about action here to sustain jobs. There is a crisis happening in Ontario. People who have worked hard all their lives, who have contributed to the community, paid their taxes, are losing their jobs by the thousands. They look to the McGuinty government for a response, and all they hear are empty words.

Some of the workers who were laid off at St. Thomas said this: "I don't think they are paying attention. St. Thomas manufacturing is going." Some of the workers in Welland: "Our hometown is dying." What they're asking for is some action from the McGuinty government.

Are you prepared to implement these proposals or are we simply going to hear more empty words from the McGuinty government?

1050

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: When it comes to thoughtful proposals, we've heard from the best thinkers on these kinds of things for a long time now, that when it comes to dealing with the manufacturing challenges being faced not only here in Ontario and the rest of Canada but in the US, the UK, Australia and other parts, you've got to invest in the skills and education of your workers. That's why four years ago we put out our Reaching Higher plan, which is a massive \$6.2-billion investment in our workers.

As well, we've heard that you've got to help companies invest in the latest equipment and technologies, which is why we have our advanced manufacturing investment strategy in place.

We've heard that you've got to help them adopt new ideas earlier, help find a way to commercialize those new ideas. That's why a number of years ago we developed the Ministry of Research and Innovation, and during the last three years we've put over \$1.5 billion into over 1,000 ideas. Those are good, solid ideas. We've known about these for a long time. These are not johnny-come-lately proposals. We've been on this for a long time and we'll continue to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier. New question.

Mr. Howard Hampton: To the Premier: You mentioned post-secondary funding—again, empty words. Where does Ontario rank in terms of post-secondary funding in Canada? Tenth out of 10.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Howard Hampton: I want to ask the Premier now about hydro rates, because as thousands of workers lose their jobs, the McGuinty government wants to jack up how much people have to pay each month simply to heat and light their homes. Why? Because Ontario Power Generation is demanding a 15% increase for electricity, for the most part produced by their nuclear plants.

The Minister of Energy described nuclear power in this House yesterday as affordable and reliable. If nuclear power is so affordable, why do we see this surprise rate increase needed to finance nuclear plants?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

Hon. George Smitherman: As I had a chance a minute ago to say to the leader of the official opposition, a variety of factors contribute to the increases that are being felt with respect to electricity prices in the province of Ontario. We acknowledge that this is a challenging circumstance for households.

For the typical user of about 1,000 kilowatt hours a month, this is approximately a \$2.40 increase, to be attributed to a variety of factors which certainly include bringing onto line more renewable energy in Ontario.

It's just not right for the honourable member to stand and try to lay this on his ideological hobby horse. We have an energy supply in Ontario, 75% of which comes from nuclear in Niagara Falls, and we're seeing an increase in other forms of renewables, which are part and parcel of the price increase that consumers will feel, and we're giving them better tools with respect to conservation to help assuage those impacts.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: The minister can prattle on, but it's very clear: The Ontario Energy Board said yesterday, "The new rate partly accounts for Ontario Power Generation's request to get paid 14.8% more for the electricity it generates from its regulated nuclear and hydro-

electric power plants...." So most of this is on account of the costs of nuclear. And get this: It doesn't cover the major refurbishments of reactors, nor the building of new reactors proposed by the McGuinty government. This is just about keeping the nuclear fleet running.

Minister, Moody's Investor Service said in May that the power from new nuclear plants will cost 15 cents a kilowatt hour, a price which the Ontario Power Authority acknowledges would make nuclear power uneconomic. Why does the McGuinty government insist on going down the road of "go nuclear, go big" when it's clear this is going to be very expensive power, more expensive than—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. George Smitherman: It's fine, I suppose, for the honourable member to come to this House and pretend that Ontario is moving in a direction with respect to nuclear, but the reality is that it has been our past and it is our present, and we seek to ensure that our fleet of nuclear reactors is able to perform on par with the way they have for a couple of decades in the province of Ontario.

I think it's noteworthy that in the honourable member's presentation, when he quoted from the Ontario Energy Board, he said—their words—"partly accounts," but within 10 seconds, he said "most of this." This is where he gets a bit carried away with himself.

The costs that are being borne here by individuals, which we recognize are challenging, come from a variety of factors. But alongside them is an increase in the amount of money that we're paying to help support these very individuals through enhanced conservation initiatives.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: The only people in Ontario who are getting carried away are the McGuinty government, and all you have to look at, all you have to examine are the pennies that are going towards conservation and renewable energy and the multi-billions that the McGuinty government will spend on nuclear power. It's pennies for conservation, pennies for alternative energy and multi-billions for nuclear power.

But what's even worse is, you want to push this through while delaying the integrated power supply plan hearings. In other words, you want to delay the very hearings that are supposed to look at what are the ins and outs, the ups and downs of energy supply for Ontario, while you push forward the nuclear stuff.

I ask this of the Premier: You're putting the cart before the horse. You're launching the nuclear strategy before you sit down and look at what we ought to be doing from stage one. Will you reverse this? Will you complete the integrated power supply hearings before—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. George Smitherman: The honourable member obviously counts pennies differently than the people of

the province of Ontario, because I think one of the things in the background, which has been publicly available to the member, says that Ontario Power Authority spending on conservation and contracts for gas-fired and renewable generation is forecast to increase by about \$25 million a month. This is not pennies; this is a substantial contribution. This brings to life four new gas-fired plants—an important, crucial element in transitioning off coal. Under the standard offer program, this provides for 524 megawatts of wind, 54 megawatts of hydroelectric and biomass, and 264 megawatts of photovoltaics, of solar.

These are examples, poignant examples, for the people of the province of Ontario of the transition from coal, that at the same time support them in their efforts to reduce the use of energy on the part of all of us—an important balance for the climate and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. New question.

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Premier: In response to questions concerning the loss of manufacturing jobs in communities across this province, the Premier and his ministers continue to cite government programs as their response to job losses and stress in our communities. While the announcement of these programs held out great hope for businesses, what we're learning now is that they're very short on delivery.

I would ask the Premier, would he direct his ministers to table with the House a list of all of the programs, a list of the applications that were made for those programs, a list of the approved applications and a list of the funding that has actually been disbursed to businesses in the province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I say to the member, the gist of his question is, as the government is investing these dollars either by way of grants or loans, is it being done in a timely fashion? Is it being done within the 45-day commitment that has been made? Keeping in mind that within the 45 days there are opportunities for the applicant to provide more information—the applicant's going to want to obviously put the best application forward, so in some cases, different information and more information will be needed. In fact, the applicant works with the government in order to reach that time limit.

I can say to the member that the time limits have, in fact, been met, and I certainly have not, although I'm happy to work with the member, dealt yet with a company—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: The minister did not get the gist of my question at all, so I'll go back to the Premier and I will ask the Premier once again, will the Premier direct the minister to give us this information? It's very simple:

a list of the number of companies who have applied, a list of the number of companies that have in fact been approved and a list of the number of companies who have actually received funds. It's very simple. It's a matter of transparency and accountability, and I would ask once again, will that information be tabled with the Legislature so that we can in fact see what's going on with these programs?

Interjection: It's a short list.

Hon. Michael Bryant: Of course. All of this information is tabled in public accounts. But I say to the member who said it's a short list—short list? Excuse me? One hundred and fourteen new jobs; 900 sustained jobs; a five-year, \$1.15-billion investment through the Next Generation of Jobs Fund; a half-a-billion-dollar investment through the advanced manufacturing strategy; nearly 4,000 jobs sustained or created—that's not a small list.

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In fact, the gist of the member's question is to try and somehow play "gotcha" with the government's efforts to make investments that create jobs. The member does not have an alternative other than tax cuts, I suppose; the member does not suggest that we in fact should be putting the money into different companies; the member is trying to play "gotcha." My response to the member is, you're right: The public accounts will in fact be able to answer your "gotcha" question, but at the end of the day, we're focused on getting jobs for—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. New question.

POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Premier. Mr. Premier, tomorrow is the United Nations International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. Ontarians across the length and breadth of this province will be calling for action to end poverty here. We are worried that this government's promise to reduce poverty is being put on hold. Yesterday the Premier said in this Legislature, "We'll delay new undertakings," and also said, "There will be no undue expenditures." Will the Premier tell Ontarians right now that his government will, as promised, commit significant new investments to reduce poverty in the upcoming economic statement?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The member opposite is nothing if not tenacious on this issue, and I respect that.

We've obviously got to carefully consider the kinds of new investments and new initiatives that we will undertake on the part of Ontarians. He knows, as well, that we've been doing a lot of work on the poverty front. We've met with many Ontarians and received many good ideas and some solid recommendations. We look forward to making a significant announcement in December, in keeping with our original commitment.

Obviously, we will take into account our financial circumstances, but as I said before, I am absolutely committed to laying a solid foundation for progress in a

way that has not been experienced before in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: Mr. Premier, Ontarians will be coming together tomorrow in Bracebridge, Cambridge, Cobourg, Cornwall, Kingston, Newmarket, Ottawa, Owen Sound, Sarnia, Windsor and here at Queen's Park to urge your government to include concrete measures to reduce poverty in the upcoming budget.

I will be joining the participants here at Queen's Park. My question to you is simple: Will you commit now to be present at the vigil and to personally reassure participants that the next economic statement and next budget will indeed include significant new, concrete measures to reduce poverty?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think I've indicated a number of times, both in this Legislature and outside, our continuing strong commitment to make progress on this front.

But let me tell you: We're not waiting until December to launch any efforts when it comes to addressing poverty. We already have in place the Ontario child benefit, with monthly benefits now flowing to families, which will support 1.3 million Ontario children. We've raised the minimum wage a number of times now. We have raised the social assistance rates. We've invested more in affordable housing. We're putting in place a new dental program. We have doubled the funding for our student nutrition program for children who are coming to school hungry.

Those are the kinds of programs that we have put in place; those are the kinds of programs that we continue to support. We look forward to building on that with our announcement in December.

GREENBELT

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Earlier this month I was invited by Ontario Nature and the Oak Ridges Trail Association to a special event in Palgrave celebrating a new link from the Oak Ridges Trail to the Bruce Trail. A reporter attending the occasion wrote an article published in the National Post some days later, decrying a new housing development that he said was occurring in the greenbelt. "There, by the road, a bulldozer was pawing away, cutting a hole in a hillside, next to a sign announcing 'Estate Homes.'" The author went on to say, "This spot is in the heart of the greenbelt."

Minister, this government was supposed to protect 1.8 million acres of green space, many of which are in my riding. What assurance can you give to my constituents, who want to ensure that this land is truly protected?

Hon. Jim Watson: I want to thank the honourable member from Oak Ridges—Markham, who is one of the great defenders of the greenbelt, because not only does it affect her community but she understands the importance from an economic and environmental point of view, so I thank her very much.

There are specific rural settlement areas and urban areas within the greenbelt that allow for some growth for existing communities. The area the author was talking about is one of the small rural areas in the town of Caledon that's allowed to have some limited development. However, this particular area that the author was referring to is not part of the 1.8 million acres of protected space under the greenbelt.

I know that the Conservative Party, who voted against the greenbelt, are jealous that this is a greenbelt that is recognized around the world as probably the most effective greenbelt. Let me quote the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy: "Ontario's greenbelt is positioned to be the most successful and most useful greenbelt"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you for clearing this matter up, and it is a relief to know that this government remains committed to protecting green space in Ontario. But these developments in rural areas within the greenbelt need to move forward with caution. As you know, there are valuable agricultural and water resources in the greenbelt, and development must not deteriorate these resources. In my riding, I know my constituents want their communities to grow, but they want them to grow in a sustainable way. They want to ensure that their communities remain safe, healthy places to live for their children and grandchildren. Minister, how are you ensuring that development doesn't get out of hand in my riding?

Hon. Jim Watson: When specific applications are submitted in rural settlement areas not in the greenbelt itself, they need to conform to the environmental policies laid out in the Oak Ridges conservation plan. Let me just give you three examples of what we're doing to protect this precious green space: ensuring that the development does not affect groundwater and aquifer resources in the area; ensuring that the natural terrain and topography of the area is maintained as best as possible; and no development within the environmental features such as woodlots or wetlands.

Premier McGuinty made a commitment that we wanted to grow the greenbelt, that we're not interested in developing on the greenbelt, and we have lived up to that commitment. We consulted the municipal sector and environmental groups and landowners throughout the province of Ontario, and over 300 delegations came forward. We just announced a few months ago that we have released the criteria for the expansion of the greenbelt. Municipalities now can apply to expand the greenbelt within their jurisdictions. This is great news for the economy, great news for the environment and great news for the people of Ontario.

VIOLENT CRIME

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is for the Attorney General. I think we all are very much aware of the tragic murders of two women in Toronto and the fact that the individual charged with those murders was on

bail, awaiting trial for two violent sexual assaults with a blunt object. I'm quoting from Joe Warmington's column in the *Toronto Sun*, where Joe says, "We cannot allow the outrageous slayings of Saramma and Susan to be forgotten because these are the names of two women who did not have to die." That's a view I think most Ontarians would share. Minister, can you tell us if the crown appealed the bail decision, and if not, why not?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: All of our thoughts are with the families, the relatives and the community. We're all part of a community that was affected by these terrible tragedies. My friend will appreciate that I don't want to comment to too great an extent on an ongoing proceeding. There is a proceeding before the court.

With respect to the question of release, I can say the following: that in cases of violent offences, serious offences, the crown opposes release; in cases of serious, they always oppose release. This was a case where the accused had been detained initially—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I certainly hope the minister has more to say in the supplementary, because I asked him a specific question about appeal to the Superior Court on the bail release decision. He didn't answer that in the initial question response.

This is a serious question related to confidence in the justice system in this province. We're told this individual was released on a \$10,000 bond with no deposit. One of the conditions when you look at a bail release is the likelihood of committing further offences. We're also told there's a history of breach of court orders with this particular individual. This is bringing the administration of justice, I would suggest, into disrepute. That's another condition that the judge should be considering when making a release decision.

Minister, by not answering my question you're contributing to the concern about the system and whether it's actually protecting Ontarians in this province. Again I ask you, did you appeal to the—

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: As my colleague would know, decisions on release are either made by a justice of the peace or, in this case, a judge. Once there's been an initial decision by a justice of the peace, a review of that decision has to be to a judge. That the review was brought after further legal proceedings—let's just say that the judge made an independent decision. The crown, in serious cases, always takes the position that public safety is always paramount in any case and starts at the position in serious cases to oppose release—and that decision was made independently by a judge in the proceeding my colleague is referring to.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. This summer, the Mc-

Guinty Liberals rewrote the temporary care assistance program rules cutting off grandparents raising their grandchildren from much-needed financial support. Adding insult to injury, the minister suggested grandparents could just apply for welfare. Her response reminds me of Marie Antoinette's statement, "Let them eat cake."

When will the McGuinty Liberals reverse the changes to the temporary assistance program by reinstating today all grandparents raising their at-risk grandchildren?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I thank the member from the third party for his question. First of all, let me say that we appreciate grandparents taking care of their grandchildren who are in difficulty, but I want to correct what the member is saying. There was no rule change.

Mr. Paul Miller: Yes, there was.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: This member came to me because the application of the TCA was different across the province. We reviewed it, and he was right. So there was no directive change. There was no rule change. But we were asking municipalities to apply the temporary care allowance rule as it should be. That's what happened.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'll be more than happy to show the minister the rule changes.

The minister suggested that these grandparents take their needs to the Liberals' poverty reduction review. What this government has reduced in funding for these grandparents—the only action that has been taken is to push these grandparents further into poverty.

The minister's complete misunderstanding of this issue and her callous disregard for the plight of these grandparents shows that she is out of touch with her ministry's clients. Why would this minister even suggest putting more people on the welfare system?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, this minister worked to make sure that the Ontario child benefit became a benefit in Ontario, and we know that a lot of children are benefiting from this Ontario child benefit.

The question is, if grandparents are in financial difficulty, these grandparents are like anyone in Ontario who has financial difficulty. They are entitled to Ontario Works. That was a comment that I made if they are in difficulty. But the children are receiving—and this program is not income-tested. That means that grandparents who are receiving temporary care assistance can have very good incomes.

ONTARIO FILM AND TELEVISION INDUSTRY

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: My question is to the Minister of Culture. Ontario's film and television industry is an important economic contributor to our province. The film and television industry generates about \$2 billion to our economy and creates nearly 12,600 jobs here in Ontario. To ensure that Ontario continues to produce talented film producers, directors and new media developers, we must

invest in training institutions to support this important economic sector.

Mr. Speaker, through you, can the Minister of Culture tell this House what the government is doing to help support film and television training institutions?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: I thank my colleague from Hamilton Mountain, who is a wonderful supporter of arts and culture, especially now that Hamilton is my second-favourite city.

The McGuinty government has understood for a very long time what investing in our film and media training institutions means to our economy. By investing in those film training institutions, we're creating the conditions that are necessary to attract production and have companies come and film in Ontario. It also means that Ontario will be able to compete globally in an increasingly competitive TV and film industry. That's why I was very happy to announce during the Toronto International Film Festival that this government invested \$2.5 million to improve the facilities of the Canadian Film Centre.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: I'm pleased to hear that the government is investing in institutions that train and prepare Ontarians for the rapidly expanding industry. Investments in the Canadian Film Centre will continue to help produce top-rated industry workers and perhaps the next Norman Jewison or Ivan Reitman.

Minister, you mentioned that the film industry is becoming increasingly competitive—certainly. Ontario needs to do more to attract film productions to our province—and to Hamilton. Mr. Speaker, through you, can the Minister of Culture tell this House what the government is doing to support the industry and attract productions to film here in Ontario?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: I thank my very knowledgeable colleague for yet another brilliant question. She's dead on the money as ever, because it isn't enough to just invest in our wonderful training facilities, as we have done, one of them in question being the Canadian Film Centre, but it's also very important to be part of a government, as I am with Mr. McGuinty and Mr. Duncan, who understand only too well that we need to compete. One of the ways we need to compete is by our tax credit system. That's why the tax credit enhancements were increased from 30 to 35 for our domestic productions and from 18 to 25 for foreign. This province has the right combination of home-grown talent, technical expertise, facilities and financial incentives to best position our province in all our cities and all of our towns as a key film production centre.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is for the Premier. Halton Healthcare is in a dire situation. Despite the growth in Milton and Oakville—a growth that has been mandated by our government through Places to Grow—our hospital projects are stalled. The chair of Halton region has tried to contact the Minister of Health for an

appointment, but has been passed along the bureaucratic line and treated like a nuisance. Premier, this problem is not going away. Milton and Oakville continue to grow; in fact, it's getting worse. You have given us no indication that you care, and your health minister won't talk to our municipal leaders. Why are you treating the people of Halton like second-class citizens,

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

Hon. George Smitherman: I do want to say to the honourable member that there is extraordinary awareness in our government about the growth that's occurring in Halton region, and obviously the growth plan is part of what addresses that. What's a little bit discouraging is that the honourable member, in asking such a question, doesn't acknowledge that it's his own party's plan to cut health care spending by \$3 billion, which would negate not only the construction of new hospitals, but most seriously impair the operation of existing ones.

In the case of Halton Healthcare and the Oakville Trafalgar site, it's still our government's plan—with the community—to invest hundreds of millions of dollars in the construction of a new facility. There is some short delay in moving forward with that project, which is related to construction capacity in the province of Ontario. As Minister of Infrastructure, I can assure the honourable member that project is still very much in our government's sights. We desire to make it happen with the good people of Halton, as we recognize their needs must be met.

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The minister knows full well that it's not our plan to take anything out of health care.

I go back to the Premier—

Interjections.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: —when the children come to order, Speaker.

Premier, the Halton regional council meets on Wednesday, October 29. Will you give your assurances that the Minister of Health will meet with the chair of Halton, as per his request, before that date so that he can properly inform his council of the hospital situation in Halton? Will you do that, Premier?

Hon. George Smitherman: I can't commit to a meeting on behalf of my colleague. As it is a matter of infrastructure, if it's of any assistance to the yelling honourable member across the way, I'd be very, very happy to meet with the regional chairman. That would give me an appropriate opportunity, on behalf of our government, to restate what is obvious to most. As we've transferred the land without cost to the community, and as we've spent more than \$10 million on planning a new hospital, and as it continues to be in our government's infrastructure plan, I'd be very happy to convey very directly to the members of Halton, to the regional chair, our government's commitment to moving forward with this project. At the same time, I'll remind him that the

official opposition here at Queen's Park promises nothing but to cut health care spending by \$3 billion.

ELEMENTARY TEACHERS

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I have a question for the Minister of Education.

Minister, teacher-librarians in elementary schools lead to a love of reading. Design and tech programs in grades 7 and 8 will help produce the skilled labour that Ontario needs. Having our students jump up and down in the classroom for 20 minutes a day is no substitute for qualified physical education instructors in elementary schools. Your refusal to provide these things, amongst other things, has led to an impasse with the elementary teachers of Ontario.

Will the minister sit down with the elementary teachers to resume negotiations, establish peace and stability, and provide our students with the programs they need?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Our door is open to that conversation, and the elementary teachers of Ontario know that. We have been in conversation with the federations and unions in the province since last December. In fact, we have more than 34 local agreements that have been either ratified or tentatively agreed to already. There are framework agreements with all but two of our federations in the province. So the relationship between this government and education employees in the province is very, very solid. I am absolutely convinced that the elementary teachers will come back and continue the provincial discussion with us. As I've said, our door has been and remains open to that conversation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The reality, Minister, is the following: You are imposing a framework for settlement on teachers that they did not negotiate. While the minister is prepared to settle for peace and stability, the teachers want peace, stability, and quality. When will the minister put excellence ahead of expediency and begin free and open collective bargaining with the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We have been explicit in our expression of support for the collective bargaining process. The provincial discussion that has been put in place follows on a conversation that happened five years ago and led to four years of peace and stability, which led to the ability of teachers and support workers in our system to get on with the business of providing service to our kids, improving their professional development opportunities—all things that could not happen when there was such a bad working relationship with the previous government. So excellence is exactly what has ensued from the fact that we've had such a good working relationship.

We are open to this conversation with the elementary teachers of Ontario. I look forward to the conversation. I am convinced that the offer that is on the table and the provisions that are there are fair, they're reasonable, and I

look forward to having that conversation with the elementary teachers.

GREAT LAKES

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I have a question for the Minister of Natural Resources.

Minister, the Great Lakes are one of the crown jewels of Ontario's natural heritage. I'm pleased to represent roughly half of the north shore of Lake Superior and all of the north shore of Lake Huron. They provide us with drinking water and food. They are a source of recreation. They are a gateway to Ontario's economic prosperity.

For the people in my riding, healthy water levels are a critical component for vibrant tourism, but they need strong representation to ensure that they prosper. A lack of political will could bring us back to the darker days when, for example, Lake Erie was deteriorating. Would the minister tell the House what Ontario is doing to keep the Great Lakes great?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I'd like to thank the member from Algoma-Manitoulin for his question and his constant raising of this profile, because Manitoulin has so many freshwater lakes.

The Great Lakes contain 20% of the world's surface water and 95% of North America's surface water, so their health is absolutely critical to the well-being of our ecological system. We must do, and we are doing, everything we possibly can to ensure their monitoring.

Climate change has had a significant impact. The Great Lakes are glacier lakes, so precipitation is critical, but evaporation can do a great deal as well, as it lowers those levels, and we've had some indication of this. We've been working with the International Joint Commission, we're monitoring the lake, we're working to see what we can do—and you're right, Lake Erie is a good example. It's the world's largest commercial freshwater fishery, and it's due to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: As you know, Ontario shares the jurisdiction of the Great Lakes with many other jurisdictions, and although Ontario is the only Canadian jurisdiction on four of the Great Lakes, and of course the fifth one is totally an American-bordered lake, we have some interests shared with the other jurisdictions. As fresh water supply resources become scarcer and other jurisdictions pay close attention to the Great Lakes, it is important that we ensure that we have strong protection in place and co-operation with our neighbours so that we can ensure we continue to enjoy and profit from healthy Great Lakes.

Could the minister tell the House what actions we are taking in Ontario with our provincial and American counterparts to ensure that this is the case?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: Thanks very much for the question. There's no question that international action was needed to fully protect our Great Lakes. We do share the border with the United States; it runs through four of

the Great Lakes. Water doesn't stop flowing because of a dotted line on a map, so water diversion is a critical issue for all of us. The loss of any water is critical on both sides.

That's why in 2007 our government passed the Safe-guarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act. It made sure that we had an agreement with our southern friends and that we were on the same page. We have eight great lakes that border on the States. They've had to craft an agreement, and I'll speak about it later on in the Legislature, but it's a really good example whereby, working together, we've made a significant agreement that will impact all of our lives, surrounding the Great Lakes, in the next number of years to come, and we will continue to do so.

TOBACCO CONTROL

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is for the Minister of Health Promotion. On the main page of the website of Philip Morris USA it says, "We are the largest tobacco company in the USA." In 2007-08, your ministry will spend over \$56 million to get Ontarians to reduce their use of tobacco, but the irony is this: Millions and millions of Ontario taxpayers' dollars are being invested into tobacco stocks.

My question is, can you explain why you are allowing \$21 million of taxpayers' money, paid to the Ontario public service employees' pension trust, to be invested into the largest tobacco company in the USA, Philip Morris?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. I will tell the member opposite that the Ministry of Health Promotion is responsible for overseeing the smoke-free Ontario strategy. The smoke-free Ontario strategy promotes healthier lives for thousands of Ontarians. The reason for the smoke-free Ontario strategy is because tobacco smoke kills many Ontarians—13,000, as a matter of fact—every year. It costs the health care system millions and millions of dollars. We continue to have strategies to address the issue of smoking in Ontario, and we will continue to do so because it's a big issue for the health of Ontarians.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: That's a very interesting strategy from the Minister of Health Promotion. Your ministry has spent more than \$13 million on smoking cessation products and programs. You have stated that public health officials are visiting tobacco vendors. Yet despite this, you continue to allow illegal and dangerous tobacco products to be sold to children. Minister, \$79.9 million is the amount of money, taxpayer-paid dollars, that the teachers' union of Ontario invests in Altria, the parent company of Philip Morris, which I mentioned in the previous question. You have stated yourself today that the health costs of Ontarians who use tobacco products have a massive effect on the health system in this prov-

ince. Do you not feel that, in the best interests of Ontario taxpayers, their money should be invested elsewhere?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Again, I would advise the member opposite that my ministry is responsible for the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, and the reason why this ministry is looking into tobacco smoking is that it's a huge issue for the province of Ontario. The reason for that is because it is the number one preventable cause of death in Ontario. Sixteen thousand Ontarians die every year from tobacco smoke. That's why we have a number of different programs in this ministry that address the issue of tobacco smoking. The cost to the taxpayers in Ontario is \$2.7 billion in lost productivity and \$1.7 billion in health care costs. Our plan and our programs are designed to help—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. New question.

TOBACCO CONTROL

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Promotion de la santé.

In March 2008, she said that since 2003, tobacco use in Ontario has fallen by over 30%. Yet from Health Canada we get stats that show that it has flat-lined in this period and, really, from 2005 to 2007 it has increased from 16% to 18%. Why is the minister attempting to paint a distorted rosy picture of smoking rates?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Our government has increased our investment in tobacco control by 600%. Our smoke-free Ontario strategy is designed to prevent children and youth from starting to smoke, to help Ontarians quit smoking, and also to protect Ontarians from exposure to second-hand smoke. The strategy is the most comprehensive tobacco control strategy Ontario has ever had, and it's the strongest among North American countries.

The Smoke-Free Ontario Act prohibits smoking in enclosed workplaces and enclosed public places. On May 31, 2008, the provision of the act prohibiting the display of tobacco products at point of sale came into force. We recently amended the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Smoke-free Ontario is a good program, but I am concerned about how we are measuring smoking rates. What the minister is measuring right now is the sale of legal cigarettes, but that tells us very little about how much people in Ontario actually smoke. This is especially true for young people, who are three times as likely to use cigarillos, which are not in your stats, and to use contraband cigarettes. We need new action, new regulation, not the same, not complacency. What concrete action is this minister prepared to take to address the real smoking trends in Ontario, such as rising cigarillo and contraband cigarette use amongst youth?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: First of all, I would like to thank the member for admitting that the Smoke-Free Ontario Act is a good strategy and a good act. That's why

we continue to work with this act and continue to try to get people to quit smoking. That is why we prohibit the sale of tobacco to any person under the age of 19.

We have made it mandatory for anyone who appears to be under 25 years of age to present ID before purchasing tobacco. In 2008, we also banned the display of tobacco products, as I said before, including chewing tobacco, at convenience stores. Our government is concerned that these little cigars, also known as cigarillos, and smokeless tobacco products are being marketed in ways that are specifically appealing to young—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Question period has now ended.

This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1136 to 1300.

STANDING ORDERS

Mr. John O'Toole: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I know how troubling this is for you and other members of the House when there are these unnecessary delays because of the timing of a question period or members' statements and you're left holding what I would say is whether to call a time. I extend my sympathies and hope that the ruling—

Mr. Tim Hudak: Bring back the old rules.

Mr. John O'Toole: The old rules did work, and now they don't.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the member. It is not a point of order, and I would certainly encourage him also—if he has issues regarding any of the standing orders, that they be addressed through the House leaders. As well, by the way the members are surrounded over there, it looks like they're ready to go anyway.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

COLORECTAL CANCER

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I rise today to honour and congratulate Nicole Chuchmach of Milton. Together with her friends Jill Harper and Natalie Atkinson, Nicole is in the midst of an 800-kilometre run from Milton to New York City to raise awareness about colorectal cancer.

Now on the road in rural New York, this team of courageous women should arrive in Manhattan on or about October 24. Nicole is running in memory of her mother, Sophie, who succumbed to cancer in 2006 at the age of 59—far too early.

On average, 400 Canadians will be diagnosed with colorectal cancer every week. Overall, colorectal cancer is the second-leading cause of death from cancer in Canada.

Let us honour Nicole, her mother and all those affected by cancer by becoming more aware and by giving generously so that we might one day find a cure.

OTONABEE REGION CONSERVATION FOUNDATION

Mr. Jeff Leal: I rise today to speak about the Otonabee Region Conservation Foundation. In 1968, Ms. Christine Normabell had a vision for her community: to create a foundation that would promote conservation. She established a partnership with the Otonabee Region Conservation Authority to provide support and assistance in the promotion of conservation through the following mandate:

- to protect and enhance sustainable forest, woodlot, wetland and other wildlife communities;

- to promote landowner stewardship programs;

- to educate the public on environmental issues and practices;

- to promote affordable, accessible outdoor recreation;

- to protect environmentally significant lands;

- to conserve pioneer articles and heritage buildings and structures owned by the foundation; and finally

- to establish conservation awards, academic scholarships, bursaries and grants in environmental studies.

I am proud to say that this is a mandate that is implemented every day by ORCA.

Congratulations to the Otonabee Region Conservation Foundation and to ORCA for their work in conservation over the past 40 years.

INTERNATIONAL CREDIT UNION DAY

Mr. Tim Hudak: I join the 1.7 million Ontarians who are members of a credit union or caisse populaire to celebrate International Credit Union Day.

These member-owned, democratically controlled financial institutions play an important role in Ontario's economy. They directly contribute \$410 million to Ontario's economy and employ over 7,000 women and men. They play a crucial role especially in 43 communities in Ontario, where credit unions and caisses populaires are the only financial institutions, like Stevensville, the original home of the Tim Hudak action centre. They provide financial support to 31,000 small and medium-sized businesses, the engines of Ontario's economy.

Locally, in my riding, Meridian Credit Union, with branches in Fonthill, Vineland, Beamsville and Grimsby, and McMaster Savings in Mount Hope provide important financial products and outstanding customer service to families and seniors. Whether it's helping first-time homebuyers realize the Canadian dream of home ownership, or providing industry-specific funding to the grape and tender-fruit farmers, credit unions are important partners to help keep our economy moving forward.

You may well know that Meridian Credit Union in Beamsville, for example, sponsors the Meridian Walk for Families, benefiting the Women's Resource Centre, every year.

I join the staff and members of Ontario's credit unions and caisses populaires in celebrating the outstanding con-

tribution they continue to make to communities across Ontario.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I rise in the House today to speak on our government's initiatives for making the workplaces of Ontario much safer.

Musculoskeletal disorders, or MSDs, are serious injuries that develop over time through such actions as bad posture or through poor ergonomic workspace design in the office. The result is that over time, the muscles, the nerves and the tendons weaken or become injured through repetitive strains, leading to serious health consequences. These types of injuries are a significant workplace health and safety issue, and the effects of these injuries cost our economy more than \$19 billion between 1996 and 2006.

The Ministry of Labour, in partnership with members of the Occupational Health and Safety Council of Ontario, has developed a set of tools with the goal of educating members of the public about how to prevent MSD injuries. These include an MSD prevention tool box, which provides information on how to conduct an MSD risk assessment in your own workplace, setting up an MSD prevention program, and enhancing a workplace's current MSD prevention practices. They also have an on-line database that shares information on how to control MSD hazards, which provides links to over 200 MSD prevention resources. The website can be accessed at www.preventionpractices.com. I urge all members of the public to take a look at that site, and I encourage all members of the House to visit the site and to assess their working conditions in their own offices.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John O'Toole: I rise in the House today to alert the people of Ontario: Dalton McGuinty is raising your taxes.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Again.

Mr. John O'Toole: Again. We are in the midst of a recession. People on fixed income, business, job losses—these are top-of-mind issues. What's he doing about it? Well, here's what he's doing. Just reading from the paper this morning, he's going to raise your electricity rates by as much as 12%.

For people with incomes in the public sector and other places, who have permanent jobs, this isn't really much of a problem. The \$100,000 list—not a problem. But for people who have lost their jobs, for families, for small business—for a delicatessen, for instance, which has to keep their meat cold, with listeria and all these things around—this is a problem.

It's a tax by any other name, because energy is a non-discretionary consumption. That means you have no choice whether or not you have it. It's not like cable TV, which you can just drop. This is an essential product to heat your home, cook your food, clean your clothes and

for healthy living. This is clearly a tax by any other name.

This article today in their Toronto Star, which is usually a Liberal briefing note, is reporting an increase of as much as 14% in your electricity bill. The people of Ontario, the businesses of Ontario, the economy of Ontario, should be outraged. My constituents have told me so.

HEALTHY SCHOOLS

Mr. Michael A. Brown: It is with great pleasure that I rise today to share with this House and with all Ontarians recent additions to the McGuinty government's ongoing commitment to helping students reach their full potential.

The recent implementation of the Eating Well Looks Good on You campaign is designed to bring healthier food to school cafeterias, which will allow the government to move forward on its twin goals of promoting better health and boosting success for all students in Ontario. This project has partnered with the famed chef David Rocco, Real Food for Real Kids, and Foodland Ontario to create menus focused on fresh, locally grown food. The menus will be prepared with the assistance of grade 11 and 12 students. This will help plant the seeds for a lifetime of healthy food choices.

This nutrition program is in addition to the northern fruit and vegetable pilot project that currently delivers three weekly servings of fruit and vegetables to 12,000 students in the Algoma and Porcupine regions of northern Ontario.

These programs are just a few examples of the McGuinty government's commitment to students' well-being. We will continue to work hard for students across Ontario because we know that healthy students result in productive and successful students.

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INTERNATIONAL CREDIT UNION DAY

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is also my pleasure today to celebrate International Credit Union Day. As you know, credit unions and their francophone counterparts, les caisses populaires, are community-owned, democratic financial institutions and, yes, they play a very important role in Ontario's economy.

Credit unions and caisses populaires are locally focused and put a great emphasis on helping the members of their co-ops. They take the saying, "Put your money where your mouth is," literally. I will demonstrate that in the way they invest their money.

Credit unions have about 5% of the retail deposits in Ontario, but they account for 25% of loans to small and medium-sized businesses and 16% of credit to the agricultural sector. It is important to note that 80% of their commercial lending is below \$1 million, versus only 23% by the banks.

As mentioned, there are 219 credit unions and caisses populaires in Ontario. In northern Ontario, one resident

in three is a member of a credit union or caisse populaire, because they are often the only show in town; in 43 communities they are. I'm happy to report that in my riding I have les caisses populaires Azilda, Coniston, d'Alban, St-Jacques, Val Caron et Vermillon, as well as the Northern Credit Union and the Sudbury Credit Union.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: On Friday, October 3, I had the privilege to ride with Hamilton Emergency Medical Services. This experience provided me with the opportunity to learn about the front line of the Ontario emergency health care system and meet the men and women who provide this service for Hamilton.

On the night shift I witnessed the precision and care with which Hamilton EMS handles the 55,000 emergencies it responds to each year. Acting with poise under pressure, the EMS team responded to each distinct call with professionalism and dedication so worthy of their mission statement: "Protect and promote quality of life and public safety." I would like to thank Brent Browett, director of Hamilton EMS; Jim Kay, general manager of Hamilton EMS; and Tim Spence, EMS supervisor. They facilitated this ride and are invaluable members of our community.

We all know in principle what emergency medical service personnel are there to do: to save lives. However, this is taken for granted far too easily and too often. I would encourage my colleagues to take a ride with their local EMS to witness, as I did, the invaluable service these men and women provide for all Ontarians.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Kim Craiton: It's my pleasure to rise in the House to discuss our government's ongoing commitment to long-term care for our seniors. Before I do that, I would like to remind my Conservative colleagues of their health care legacy of drastic cuts, fewer hospital beds and ever-growing wait times, with no end in sight.

Our government recently announced a four-year, \$1.1-billion aging-at-home strategy that will partner local health integration networks to assist seniors in their communities. This unique partnership will allow these LHINs to provide seniors with the individualized, appropriate levels of care they truly deserve. This includes more home care, snow removal during the winter months and transportation to community centres for exercise and social events. This will improve the quality of life of our seniors and provide the opportunity for social interaction that is so imperative for good health.

Ontarians want their government to invest in seniors, and while we know there's still more work to be done, along with our health care partners, our government continues to make huge strides in investing in long-term care both in and outside of hospitals to improve the lives of people who are important to all of us: our seniors.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Reports by committees? Introduction of bills?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I move second reading of Bill 101, An Act respecting energy rating for specified residential buildings.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We'll allow you to do that a little later, honourable member, when private members' business begins.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ONTARIO ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY

JOURNÉE DE SENSIBILISATION À LA PRÉVENTION DES MAUVAIS TRAITEMENTS À L'ÉGARD DES PERSONNES ÂGÉES.

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: I rise in the House today to recognize that this Sunday, which is October 19, is Ontario Elder Abuse Awareness Day. It is a day for Ontarians to reflect on the responsibility we all bear to ensure that our seniors—parents, grandparents, friends and neighbours—are able to live with respect, dignity and free of fear of abuse. I want to thank my colleague, Willowdale MPP David Zimmer, for championing the very idea of an Ontario Elder Abuse Awareness Day back in 2004. Because of MPP David Zimmer's leadership, Ontario became the first province in Canada to designate an Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

It is estimated that between 65,000 and 160,000 seniors in Ontario have experienced or will experience some form of physical, emotional or financial abuse.

Le gouvernement McGuinty œuvre chaque jour à l'élimination et à la prévention des mauvais traitements envers des personnes âgées pour que nos aînés puissent vivre en sécurité et avec dignité.

Ontario developed the first strategy to combat elder abuse in Canada, and our strategy focuses on three priorities: first of all, coordination of community services; secondly, training for front-line staff; and finally, raising public awareness about elder abuse. I'm very pleased that our partner, the Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, has successfully implemented our strategy in communities across Ontario.

Last year, we announced an additional \$1.65 million so that that strategy could continue to help those in need. We also provided more than \$200,000 this year to support the work of local elder abuse prevention networks in Ontario. Just last month, we announced a grant of more than \$400,000, through the Ontario Trillium Foundation, to help ONPEA set up a new province-wide hotline to assist seniors at risk of abuse.

Cette ligne téléphonique, qui devrait être opérationnelle en mars prochain, sera ouverte 24 heures sur 24, sept jours sur sept, et accessible en 154 langues. Nous croyons que les personnes âgées devraient être capables

d'obtenir de l'aide dans la langue qui leur est la plus familière.

This hotline, which is scheduled to go live next March, will be active 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and will be accessible in 154 languages, because we believe that seniors need to get help in the language with which they are most comfortable. Next week, I'll have the honour of speaking at the fifth annual ONPEA conference, where they will be discussing new ideas for better care of seniors. Ontario's seniors deserve to live their lives with respect and dignity.

Je sais que tous les députés ici présents conviennent avec moi que nous devons, ensemble, mettre tout en œuvre pour éliminer les mauvais traitements à l'égard des personnes âgées en Ontario.

I know that everyone in this House agrees that we must, together, do all we can to eliminate elder abuse in Ontario.

GREAT LAKES-ST. LAWRENCE RIVER BASIN WATER RESOURCES COMPACT

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: It is my pleasure to stand in the House today to mark an historic event in the history of environmental protection. On October 3, United States President George W. Bush signed the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact. His signature followed ratification of the compact by the eight Great Lakes states and the US Congress. This step enacts in US law an unprecedented cross-border partnership among Ontario, Quebec and eight neighbouring states to protect the waters of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin. It is very good news for everyone who lives in the basin and in Ontario.

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The Great Lakes are a binational treasure and are vital to Ontario's economy, environment and culture. As such, this province has taken action to manage and protect the Great Lakes and all of Ontario's waters. In 1999, the Ontario government banned, by regulation, water transfers out of Ontario's three major water basins. This ban was strengthened last year with the passage of the Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act. The act elevated Ontario's ban to legislation and extended it to water transfers from one Great Lakes watershed to another, with strictly regulated exceptions.

But international action was needed to fully protect the Great Lakes. Water simply doesn't stop flowing because of a line on a map, and water diverted from the Great Lakes basin is lost to all the states and provinces that share the basin. The need for increased cross-border protection led the Great Lakes provinces and states to work together to protect this very unique natural resource.

In 2005, Premier McGuinty joined Quebec Premier Jean Charest and the governors of the eight Great Lakes states—Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin—in signing a good-faith agreement protecting the waters of the Great

Lakes basin, and the states endorsed a companion interstate compact.

Our act, passed last year, incorporated the terms of the agreement, and Quebec has followed suit, tabling a bill this June. With the US ratification of the compact, the terms of the agreement and compact will apply throughout the Great Lakes states. This international partnership is a landmark in co-operation among governments and across borders. It has enabled 10 jurisdictions to achieve a common goal.

The agreement and the compact strengthen existing protection for the Great Lakes. They place a virtual prohibition on diversion of water out of the Great Lakes basin; they establish a common basin-wide standard for managing the resource; they promote common goals and objectives across the basin that will lead to programs in each state and province to conserve water and use it more efficiently; and they commit the jurisdictions to creating a basin-wide science strategy to build on our understanding of the critical issues facing the Great Lakes, such as the impact of climate change and the culminative effects of water use.

What does this mean? It means better protection for 12.5 million Ontarians who depend on the waters of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin for their drinking water, and better protection for the 50% of Canada's manufacturing output and 25% of Canada's agriculture supported by the basin.

The Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin agreement and compact have been many years in the making. As the lead negotiator for Ontario, my ministry has spent countless hours conducting the delicate cross-border negotiations that were required to achieve consensus. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the dedicated ministry staff, who have worked so hard on behalf of the province. They include the current associate deputy minister, Kevin Wilson, but I must also mention associate deputy minister David de Launay, who started the work; Paula Thompson, a senior policy adviser on water resources; Rob Messervey, manager of the ministry's water resources section; Leith Hunter, my ministry's legal counsel; and Bill Carr, manager of international relations policy in Ontario's cabinet office.

Finally, through the final years of discussions, we were advised by an advisory panel of environmental, municipal, agricultural, industrial and academic representatives. The advice and input of the advisory panel, Ontario's First Nations and the public was critical in helping Ontario pursue a very strong agreement built on a ban on water diversions.

It is indeed a great day in this province when a unified effort by a broad coalition of interests and voices has led to landmark protection for a very precious natural resource that is so vital to our way of life. But this success is not an end; it is just the beginning. We now must dedicate ourselves to realizing the promise of the Great Lakes agreement and this compact by collaborating with our neighbours to implement these milestones in environmental protection.

I'm proud to say that the Great Lakes agreement and the compact are part of Ontario's long-term plans to work with other governments and partners to protect, to restore and to sustain the Great Lakes for the benefit of all Ontarians, not only for today but for generations to come.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

JOURNÉE DE SENSIBILISATION
À LA PRÉVENTION
DES MAUVAIS TRAITEMENTS
À L'ÉGARD DES PERSONNES ÂGÉES
ONTARIO ELDER ABUSE
AWARENESS DAY

M. Peter Shurman: Je me lève aujourd'hui pour souligner la position importante et spéciale de nos personnes âgées dans notre société. Ce sont les gens qui ont construit l'Ontario et, en fait, tout le Canada.

They have earned our respect. They cared for Canada and it is now Ontario's responsibility to care for them in return. We should all raise the alarm on the abuse of the elderly, and while elderly abuse prevention awareness day is an opportunity to do so, it is not enough. Actions, as always, speak louder than words, and no matter what the minister responsible for seniors says today, the actions of her government drown her out.

This government's conduct exposes their lack of commitment and their lack of recognition of seniors as one of the most important and fastest-growing demographics. The Liberal response to the question of assistance for grandparents who have assumed responsibility for their grandchildren is shameful.

If the McGuinty Liberals were really concerned about our seniors, they would have passed my private member's bill last session and implemented a province-wide property tax deferral system that would enable seniors to remain independent and in their homes longer. They would leave no stone unturned and open an official inquiry to determine the causes of C. difficile, a deadly disease that primarily affects the elderly. They would care enough to acknowledge that their inaction creates the perception of discrimination. This minister, who is supposed to be responsible for Ontario's seniors and the elderly, would not have dodged my question two weeks ago about her actions to protect seniors from C. difficile. She would have held her government to account instead.

As it stands, this government rears its head symbolically when it comes to seniors. On occasions such as Seniors' Month and elder abuse prevention awareness day, it congratulates itself. Stop talking about protecting seniors—especially because this Sunday is elder abuse prevention awareness day—and start doing something to protect them.

GREAT LAKES-ST. LAWRENCE RIVER BASIN
WATER RESOURCES COMPACT

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to respond to the Minister of Natural Resources' statement today on the

Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact. The Ontario Progressive Conservative Party is committed to preserving and protecting Ontario's freshwater supply.

I think it's safe to say that water is becoming increasingly a more precious resource. We are very fortunate in this province that we have 20% of the world's fresh water in our Great Lakes and, in fact, 95% of North America's fresh water in our Great Lakes. I note in the minister's speech that she commented that in 1999 the Ontario government banned, by regulation, water transfers out of Ontario's three major water basins. That would have been the great environmentalist Mike Harris who passed that regulation.

Further, in 2001, the PC government of the day signed the Great Lakes Charter Annex. That committed, with the eight states around the Great Lakes and Quebec and Ontario, to further dealing with protecting the Great Lakes, including preventing diversions out of the Great Lakes. I think that is very significant, particularly in an area like I represent, Lake Huron-Georgian Bay, where water levels have become over the last years—with the exception of this summer; with all of the rain we had, the levels actually came up. But over the last number of years, decreasing water levels have become a real problem.

We have work we can do in our own backyard. For example, did you know there's still untreated sewage and stormwaters that are going into our freshwater system? In fact, the PC government in their platform last year committed to doing away with and fixing that problem by 2015; that's something this government should be working on.

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In my own riding we have problems in Sturgeon Bay, along Georgian Bay, with blue-green algae. This government could commit to remediating that and commit some dollars to assist the township of Archipelago and the cottage association to help deal with that problem. Certainly, the coast of Georgian Bay, which happens to fall in the beautiful riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka, is one of the natural wonders of the world. It's a world biosphere reserve and it's very precious, so it's something that this government should be paying attention to.

Certainly we support the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact, and we're pleased to see that George Bush signed it. I believe that all eight states and two provinces have now agreed to it, to help protect the very precious fresh water that we have here in the province of Ontario.

GREAT LAKES-ST. LAWRENCE RIVER BASIN
WATER RESOURCES COMPACT

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Clearly, the Great Lakes are critical to the lives of millions of people who live in the Great Lakes basin and critical to Ontario's economy and Canada's economy.

This compact does do some useful things in blocking further large-scale transfers of water from the Great Lakes basin, but it is not enough to actually protect the Great Lakes in the way that they need to be protected. There are no restrictions in the legislation passed in this province that are adequate to protect against transfers from one lake to another, and we went through that debate when the bill was on the floor of this Legislature. The lack of control on those transfers ultimately threatens the political agreement between Canada and the United States on this matter.

The lakes, as everyone knows, are under assault from invasive species, and they are threatened by climate change. Here in Ontario, we don't have a plan to take on climate change. We don't see a budget allocated, when the finance minister comes forward, to actually do the substantial work that's needed.

There's no question in my mind that the Great Lakes, for us, have need of much more substantial action to make sure that they're preserved for the generations to come.

JOURNÉE DE SENSIBILISATION
À LA PRÉVENTION
DES MAUVAIS TRAITEMENTS
À L'ÉGARD DES PERSONNES ÂGÉES
ONTARIO ELDER ABUSE
AWARENESS DAY

M^{me} France Gélinas: Il me fait plaisir de souligner la Journée de sensibilisation à la prévention des mauvais traitements à l'égard des personnes âgées de l'Ontario.

Ontario Elder Abuse Awareness Day is an important time to renew our determination to end all forms of abuse that seniors in Ontario still face. Too many seniors live in conditions that put them at risk of abuse.

New Democrats believe that we must provide the conditions necessary to ensure that all elderly people can live their lives receiving the care and the support they require. We advocate for reform to the institutions and services that impact the lives of seniors. We are being proactive in protecting seniors from abuse in the first place. This means providing adequate funding to home care and long-term-care facilities, as well as engaging in poverty reduction strategies.

Those who live in long-term care do not have the adequate minimum standard of personal hours of care. New Democrats believe that our seniors in long-term-care homes deserve a minimum standard of 3.5 hours of hands-on care. I have risen and spoken in this House demanding a minimum standard of hands-on care that would ensure that, at least, every senior who lives in a long-term-care facility does not get neglected, because neglect is a form of abuse. We have demanded that home care programs be increased so that the seniors who choose to live in their own homes are not at risk of abuse.

We also want to create a system that is capable of supporting the needs of seniors in a more transparent

system. We have asked for Ombudsman oversight of long-term care and hospital facilities, so that when something happens we can learn from the problem, we can develop best practices, and we can be proactive in protecting seniors from neglect and abuse.

New Democrats are standing in support of all who advocate for the protection and the well-being of Ontario seniors. After a lifetime of building our province and communities, our seniors deserve a standard of living that will, at the minimum, protect them from abuse.

Quand les néo-démocrates demandent plus de soins à domicile, c'est pour protéger nos personnes âgées. Quand on demande un minimum de 3,5 heures de soins par personne, par résident de maison de soins de longue durée, en partie c'est pour protéger contre les mauvais traitements. Quand on demande que l'ombudsman ait le droit de faire l'investigation de plaintes de gens dans les maisons de soins infirmiers ou dans les hôpitaux, encore là on parle souvent de nos personnes âgées.

Les néo-démocrates veulent mettre en place des politiques proactives pour protéger nos personnes âgées, pour être sûrs qu'elles ne sont pas victimes de mauvais traitements. C'est ce que les néo-démocrates ont fait et vont continuer de faire.

PETITIONS

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly, which reads as follows. This is important because it's all about energy, about freezing gas prices.

"Whereas gasoline prices have increased at alarming rates during the past year; and

"Whereas the high and different gas prices in different areas of Ontario have caused confusion and unfair hardship on hard-working Cambridge families," and in fact in my riding of Durham; and

"Whereas the false promises of Premier McGuinty adversely affect the trust between Ontarians and their elected representatives;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"(1) That the McGuinty government immediately freeze gas prices for a temporary period until world oil prices moderate; and

"(2) That the McGuinty government immediately initiate a royal commission to investigate the predatory gas prices charged by oil companies operating in Ontario."

I, along with Dan McTeague from Durham, sign this petition and urge the government to act.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It has been provided to me very

kindly by the patients and staff of Dr. Nguyen from Mississauga. It reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures"—

Interruption.

Mr. Bob Delaney:—"that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I'm very pleased to sign and support this petition and to ask page Asha to carry it for me.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. I remind members, especially when they are speaking, that it would be preferable not to have the BlackBerry's even in the chamber, but to have the BlackBerry's away. You do not realize how much damage you cause to the interpreters' ears with BlackBerry's going off.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Milton District Hospital was designed to serve a population of 30,000 and the town of Milton is now home to more than 69,000 people and is still growing rapidly; and

"Whereas the town of Milton is the fastest-growing town in Canada and was forced into that rate of growth by an act of the Ontario Legislature called 'Places to Grow'; and

"Whereas the town of Milton is projected to have a population of 101,600 people in 2014, which is the earliest date an expansion could be completed; and

"Whereas the current Milton facility is too small to accommodate Milton's explosive growth and parts of the hospital prohibit the integration of new outpatient clinics and diagnostic technologies;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure take the necessary steps to ensure timely approval and construction of the expansion to Milton District Hospital."

It's signed by a large number of my constituents. I'm pleased to affix my signature and to pass it to Lauren, the page, to take to the table.

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EMERGENCY DISPATCH SERVICES

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to do with ambulance communication services.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is considering relocating emergency ambulance and fire dispatch services currently provided by Muskoka Ambulance Communications Service to the city of Barrie; and

"Whereas up to 40% of all calls received are from cellphones from people unfamiliar with the area; and

"Whereas Parry Sound-Muskoka residents have grave concerns about the effect on emergency response times if dispatch services are provided by dispatchers who are not familiar with the area; and

"Whereas 16 Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care-funded jobs, held by qualified communication officers from local communities, may be lost as a result of the relocation of dispatch services to the city of Barrie,

"Now therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario put the safety, health and economic concerns of the people of Parry Sound-Muskoka ahead of government efficiency interests and ensure that emergency dispatch services continue to be provided locally by Muskoka Ambulance Communications Service."

I support this petition.

HOSPICES

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition here from the Hospice Association of Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas hospices on church or hospital property do not pay taxes;

"Whereas hospices are not-for-profit organizations providing emotional, spiritual and bereavement support and respite care to terminally ill individuals and their family members;

"Whereas a residential hospice (usually an eight-to-10 bed home-like facility) provides around-the-clock care to terminally ill individuals and support to their families;

"Whereas hospice services are provided free of charge;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to allow hospices across the province to be exempt from municipal taxes."

This comes from the good people in the Bancroft area. I support this petition and I'll affix my name to it.

SEXUAL REASSIGNMENT SURGERY

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of the constituents in my riding of Durham, which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the previous Progressive Conservative government determined sex change operations were not a medical spending priority and instead chose to invest in essential health care services; and

"Whereas Premier McGuinty said in 2004 that funding for sex change operations was not a priority of his government; and

"Whereas the current Liberal government has eliminated and reduced OHIP coverage for" a variety of services, including "chiropractic, optometry and physiotherapy services; and

"Whereas the present shortage of doctors and nurses, troubling wait times for emergency services and other treatments, operational challenges at many hospitals, as well as a crisis in our long-term-care homes signify that the current government has not met their health care commitments;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario does not fund sex change operations under OHIP and instead concentrates its funding priorities on essential health care services and directs our health care resources to improve" all patient outcomes for Ontarians.

I'm pleased to sign the petition and present it to Marissa on her last day here as a page in the Legislative Assembly.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition from residents in Mississauga, Ontario.

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to page Paige.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital is fully utilized; and

"Whereas Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital was sized to serve a town of Oakville population of 130,000, and the current population is now" well over "170,000; and

"Whereas the population of Oakville continues to grow as mandated by 'Places to Grow,' an act of the Ontario Legislature, and is projected to be 187,500 in" the year "2012, the completion date for a new facility in the original time frame; and

"Whereas residents of the town of Oakville are entitled to the same quality of health care as all Ontarians; and

"Whereas hospital facilities in the surrounding area do not have capacity to absorb Oakville's overflow needs;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure take the necessary steps to ensure the new Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital be completed under its original timelines without further delay."

I'm pleased to support this petition and pass it to page Karlie on her last day in the Legislature.

HOSPICES

Mr. Mike Colle: I have more petitions here from the Matthews House Hospice in Tottenham, Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas hospices on church or hospital property do not pay taxes;

"Whereas hospices are not-for-profit organizations providing emotional, spiritual and bereavement support and respite care to terminally ill individuals and their family members;

"Whereas a residential hospice (usually an eight-to-10-bed home-like facility) provides around-the-clock care to terminally ill individuals and support to their families;

"Whereas hospices are provided free of charge;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to allow hospices across the province to be exempt from municipal taxes."

I support this petition and I affix my name to it.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present another petition in the extended amount of time allowed for petitions under the new standing orders. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the skyrocketing price of gasoline is causing hardship to families across Ontario; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government charges a gasoline tax of 14.7 cents per litre to drivers in all parts of Ontario; and

"Whereas gasoline tax revenues now go exclusively to big cities with transit systems, while roads and bridges crumble in other communities across Ontario"—communities like mine—"and

"Whereas whatever one-time money that has flowed to municipalities from the McGuinty Liberal government has been neither stable nor predictable, and has been insufficient to meet our infrastructure needs" in the future;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to redistribute provincial gasoline tax ..." equitably and "fairly to all communities across the province."

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to Imaan on his last day as a page here in Ontario.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition here from the good people in the riding of Eglinton—Lawrence.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas innocent people are being victimized by the growing number of unlawful firearms in our communities; and

"Whereas police officers, military personnel and lawfully licensed persons are the only people allowed to possess firearms; and

"Whereas a growing number of unlawful firearms are transported, smuggled and found in motor vehicles; and

"Whereas impounding motor vehicles and suspending driver's licences of persons possessing unlawful firearms in motor vehicles would aid the police in their efforts to make our streets safer;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 56, entitled the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act, 2008, into law, so that we can reduce the number of crimes involving firearms in our communities."

I support this petition and affix my name to it.

BEER RETAILING AND DISTRIBUTION

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the current system, practice and arrangement of retailing and distributing beer in the province of Ontario—and, more specifically, the 'near monopoly' of The Beer Store—severely restricts the accessibility, convenience and choice for retail consumers of beer in Ontario; and

"Whereas The Beer Store 'near monopoly' is controlled by 'for-profit, foreign-owned companies' and these companies are not accountable to the people of

Ontario, and these companies do not act in the best interests of the people of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That legislation be introduced that will permit the retailing and distribution of beer through alternative and additional grocery and supermarket retail channels that will fairly compete with The Beer Store, thereby allowing an accessible, convenient, safe, well-regulated and environmentally responsible retailing environment for beer to become established in the province of Ontario."

I support this petition. I'm glad to sign it, and I pass it to Michael H. on his last day in the Legislature.

1350

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind all members that their petitions are approved by the table. When you present your petitions—and I'm not signalling at any individuals—just in general, you must read the petition and not be opining or ad-libbing and adding things that weren't approved by the table.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Health Promotion concerning tobacco investment. This matter will be debated at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, October 21.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

HOME ENERGY RATING ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR L'ÉVALUATION DE L'ÉNERGIE DOMESTIQUE

Mr. McNeely moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 101, An Act respecting energy rating for specified residential buildings / Projet de loi 101, Loi traitant de l'évaluation de l'énergie pour des bâtiments d'habitation précisés.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 97, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Bill 101 mandates energy ratings of homes. In 2001, as a city councillor in the city of Ottawa, I worked on improving energy ratings of homes and the program got pulled. We were looking to try to improve energy ratings by offering incentives. I was working with Chuck Wilson, who is now in Washington running the energy program for cities in the USA. So Chuck Wilson left the city of Ottawa at the time and we didn't go any further on this, but it's been something I have been trying to do ever since.

Since 2001 we've built about 500,000 new homes in Ontario, but we do not know the energy efficiency of most of those homes. What Chuck Wilson was trying to do with his program in Ottawa was to reduce energy consumption and cut greenhouse gases. We were looking at cutting maybe two tonnes of greenhouse gases per year, per home, and that would have been one million tonnes on an annual basis that we would have reduced if his program had gone through then.

But we are not talking about greenhouse gases today. Everybody agrees that we have the right to pollute our environment. We can build the biggest, most polluting homes that we can come up with and, "Hey, we've got the money, and this generation is all that counts. Grandchildren do not count. This is our time." So today we will talk about saving dollars. We're all into saving dollars, so we'll talk about that.

In order to save dollars in our northern climate here, we just have to build better buildings. I think we have to agree that most of us live in homes, so why not provide the home the most economical way we can and build better? That includes the principal, that includes the interest and that also includes the energy use, and energy use is often left out of the equation. Investment in better buildings can save up to 50% of the energy costs, and the 5% to 7% extra dollars to build in those energy efficiencies get paid back in the first seven, eight or nine years of owning your home. That rapid payback means that you've got all your money back and then you've got 30 or 40 years with your home, getting those energy savings. So it's a great thing to do. We can do it for the dollars. According to the second annual TD Canada Trust green home poll, 59% of Ontarians are prepared to pay 5% to 10% more for a green home.

The Energy Star program in Ontario is managed by Natural Resources Canada, and includes the EnerGuide scale for measuring energy efficiency. The EnerGuide scale was developed by NRCan in Ontario and it's a very simple approach. It itemizes all the things you can do with improving your home.

Of the 60,000 homes built that would come under this legislation on an annual basis in Ontario, 5,000 already undergo that EnerGuide rating methodology. So builders of 5,000 homes a year are already doing this, and what I would like to do by this bill is get the other 55,000 homes within this program, so that we know the energy rating of those homes.

So builders and owners are already there. We have 5,000, and what we want is the 60,000 built each year to have the energy rating done.

The legislation really levels the playing field. It rewards good builders, and puts pressure on poor builders to perform better, and what's wrong with that? I think that builders out there who are doing a good job, and many of them are, should be rewarded. And for those who aren't quite up to par, this will be an incentive to do a lot better.

The big winner, of course, will be the consumer, because the consumer will know, when he's buying a

home, what the energy use of that home is going to be. The age of the home or the size of the home doesn't matter; this EnerGuide rating system, which was developed and has been used for many years in Canada and in Ontario, and is used for grants for residential property owners—there are grants if you take your property from one level of energy efficiency and raise it to another; there are programs that the federal government has and that Ontario also matches that really help. In addition, Ontario pays \$150 toward the cost of the energy audit. It's that important, because it tells you in a scientific manner. The energy advisers are trained and certified by NRCan, and know what they're doing; they see many of these homes. That's the direction we should be going here.

The big winner is the consumer. But if this consumer protection bill also helps polar bears, so what? If we can maybe keep our Arctic ice a little bit longer, those are all positive things.

Andrew Weaver, member of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change—the IPCC—and a Canadian scientist, has just written a book, *Keeping Our Cool*. I didn't read the book, but I read the article on it, and in there he says that climate scientists who grapple with climate change every day see where it's headed, and the public needs to know. These are his words: "I think the public needs to know, straight in the face, that you can give up on civilization as we know it," and he adds, "Do we actually give a damn 'for future generations?'"

I'm looking forward to reading that book, but I think those words are very pertinent to where we are and what we're doing, and we certainly aren't doing enough. We're not talking about future generations, and we're not talking about our grandchildren. We're talking about saving money. It makes sense to have these energy audits done.

I have in the gallery today, visiting and helping me with this project, Dana Silk, who is the CEO of the EnviroCentre in Ottawa. Dana has been doing work on this for eight years. Thank you, Dana, for coming today. Also, Vladan Veljovik of GreenSaver: GreenSaver has been doing work for the OPA, and makes the EnerGuide report you get when you have this energy audit done. They're making it even more realistic, and this is significant work that Vladan is doing. Christina Bisanz, executive director of the Consumers Council of Canada, is here supporting this bill.

This just gives the consumer more information, when they're making the biggest decision of their lives, to make that decision considering all elements, not only the cost of the house, the look of the house and where it is, but also the energy costs going down the road, and that's so important.

Chris Chopik is a car-free realtor in Toronto. He's an instructor at the Toronto Real Estate Board and a dedicated environmentalist. I will quote some of his comments on the bill, because I think they're very pertinent: "Mandatory time-of-sale energy labelling is coming to Ontario. The provinces of BC and Nova Scotia, the

United Kingdom and Germany have implemented time-of-sale energy labelling to protect consumers from unexpected expenses, while ensuring a rapid adoption of energy conservation within the housing market. The BC program is set to begin in 2010, while the UK and Germany have already implemented programming. Even the collapsed housing market in the United States is seeing emergence of energy staging as a successful tool for generating interest and differentiation for energy-efficient homes."

1400

He goes on to say that you don't really need more costs at the time of home purchase, but that this bill, the Home Energy Rating Act, 2008, is aimed to protect the quality of life of Ontarians in the face of rising energy prices. The Appraisal Institute of Canada in its *Renova* report says that energy-efficient upgrades are high among the list of top paybacks, along with kitchen and bathroom renovations. The challenge for real estate professionals and homeowners is understanding the objective difference in energy performance between houses. The Home Energy Rating Act, 2008, will ensure that homebuyers are absolutely clear about the energy performance characteristics of a house that they are buying. It allows consumers to understand the value of insulating in the walls, efficiency of appliances, heating and cooling and the lighting system.

"You have heard me say 'future-friendly houses are worth more.' For years I have been writing ..."—and these are all Chris's words here. "When I teach realtors about the convergence of issues, I emphasize the importance of understanding and differentiating building efficiency. It is the role of realtors to demand higher prices for houses which are materially better than the market average.

"In a scientific report examining the implications of climate change on real estate, Hot Properties, the David Suzuki Foundation asserts that realtors, appraisers, insurers and lenders need to be able to accurately identify 'green' and 'energy-efficient' real estate, and to identify potential liabilities. The Home Energy Rating Act is a piece of public policy that will simplify and enable the marketplace to understand energy performance of houses. At the end of the day, Ontarians will benefit from improved quality of life in the face of inflationary energy pressures and economic crises."

I also had a discussion with Peter Love. He is the Chief Energy Conservation Officer of Ontario. In his annual report of 2007, *Taking Action*, on page 47 he says, "Several building energy labelling pilot projects are being developed across the country to test assumptions and administrative processes for implementing building labels. In conjunction with these pilots, work is under way with stakeholders to determine the kinds of information that could reside in a database of labelled buildings in Canada. Subsection 2(1) of the Energy Conservation Leadership Act permits the government, by regulation, to require anyone selling, leasing or otherwise transferring an interest in real or personal property to

provide energy-related information. The regulation could be written to mandate an energy consumption label."

It's something that he supports very much and he has written it in as one of his recommendations on the back of the front cover, that the Ministry of Energy and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs should proceed with this. So it's something that they've already talked to.

I'll finish up by reading from something that I just received today, but I heard that it was part of the program. It was from John Tory's platform, the official Conservative platform: "A John Tory government will build a real conservation culture in Ontario that includes ... requiring home energy audits before every sale of a house—so that the market will reward homes which are energy efficient. This will be a signal to homeowners that they will get a return on energy investments in their homes."

I hope that this is an all-party-supported bill. I think it's important. I think it will save us all money. It'll save energy and it'll protect our future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: First of all, I want to commend the member for doing the right thing. Mr. McNeely from Ottawa-Orléans I believe is an engineer and a very qualified person to comment on some of these technical things.

In the general sentiment of co-operation and understanding, doing the right thing for the people of Ontario, and as the former critic for energy and stuff like that, I have some appreciation for this subject area.

I want to start by saying that John Tory, our leader, and Mr. Runciman, our House leader here—we've discussed this in caucus. I am going to make four or five points in the brief time—I only have about 10 minutes and it usually takes me that much time to introduce myself. There are four points that I would like to make in the brief time that I have been allocated, unless of course I can have unanimous consent to have an hour to get into the details. And you would appreciate, as the former Minister of Energy—the current Acting Speaker, Mr. Wilson, is the former minister, so I should be careful. There are those, including Minister Gerry Phillips, who know this topic well.

I support the whole idea of conservation culture, the whole idea that the best plan for energy and energy efficiency is conservation. The kilowatt that you don't consume is the kilowatt you don't have to generate. So he's on the right track.

The consumers of Ontario will get the shock of their life. Read the Ontario Energy Board report yesterday. It is frightening, and I'm going to get into it in more detail, but first of all, acknowledging that we've decided as a caucus to support Mr. McNeely's bill.

The point I want to make is this: First of all, this was one of the planks in our platform in the election in 2007. Okay? It was in our platform. Therefore, it must be a good decision. It's efficient use of our resources, in the general sense.

Furthermore, I don't want to cast any aspersions on the bill. The intent by Mr. McNeely is good. Somebody probably gave him this idea; he's running with it. This is good. I want to state that Mr. Love, the conservation commissioner for Ontario, is doing a worthy job. The beginning of all this discussion is about conservation and incenting conservation initiatives, whether it's the EnerStar rebate, which they cancelled—we initiated it when we were government.

Mr. Jeff Leal: And then we brought it back.

Mr. John O'Toole: Then they brought it back, because they're copying a lot of stuff we're doing. In fact, it's our policy. That's the point I'm making. The best form of compliment is flattery, imitation, copying. I have no problem with the plagiarism here.

I want to raise a very brief point, one that's worth reflecting on. It's this: The Liberals had a bill, the energy conservation bill. I forget the number of the bill, but within the regulatory section of that bill, the minister can already do this. I don't know why we are spending this time when we could be working on issues of the economy. In respect to Mr. McNeely, you've worked hard on this. We'll be supporting it; you can count on us to be there for you.

The point is this. I'm saying it already can be done. I think Mr. Phillips was the minister at the time. This can already be done by ministerial order. Not only that; if you look at the new building code—I think it's referred to as the E80 standard—it's already required that certain energy efficiency thresholds be met in installation and other home construction and residential living.

The point I'm making is this: The bill, we support. Let's get on with something more salient to the current economy and the downturn and the meltdown in the economy, the job losses. But there's more to it. The downside of it, in its implementation plan here, as I see in the bill, and I've read it—it's quite brief; in fact, I read it over lunch, but I've read it before that too—is that it's a red tape bill.

The problems I see are the two fundamental problems mentioned by all of the business sector partners we speak with, and we have been talking to the federation of independent business and to chambers of commerce and others in our recent roundtable on the economy led by John Tory. They said there was too much red tape from the current government. They're the two most important issues as impediments to the economy: red tape and taxation.

The taxation in this is, this actually—nothing is free. These home audits are not free, and the real estate agent isn't paying for it, so who's going to pay for it? The person buying the home. The real estate market is in a shambles in North America. I just came from Europe last week; it's in a shambles over there. So this is another nail in the coffin, if you will.

You can already do it. Premier McGuinty can do it already if he wants. We all agree with it, so get on with it, or send this bill to public hearings, waste more time and taxpayers' money.

There was a report issued recently by the Canadian home builders—I refer it for the record for Hansard. It's from September 17, 2008. It's online. It outlines a number of the greenhouse emission issues and standards that are important.

I just want to move to a little higher level of debate that I believe the Speaker will rule is in order. We are receiving quite frightening information. In fact, at my cottage—I've just got this letter here, and it said, "Dear customer...." I read it and it didn't look too bad until I got to this part about seasonal rates. There's an 8.3% increase in the delivery charge. This is for residential and seasonal residential properties. The Ontario Energy Board has ruled that the delivery charge is going to go up 8%. We read yesterday that it's going to be 12% in the rate—that's the actual electrons that you're using. Wait a minute here, we're talking 20%—no, it's actually 14%. It's frightening.

1410

If you look at this in detail, Ontario Power Generation—I'm looking at a Toronto Star article from the 16th. We refer to the Toronto Star as the Liberal briefing notes, and it's fine. It's a good article, actually. I usually read that, too. It says here, "Ontario Power Generation's request to get paid 14.8% more for the electricity it generates from its regulated nuclear and hydroelectric power plants, which represents about 42%" of the base—14%. This article goes on to say that they're actually going to get it.

Yesterday, they rolled out 12%. The 12% really penalizes conservation.

Here's the deal: The utilities—these are the ones that take the electrons to your house; not the transmission system, which is kind of a fixed system—whether it's Toronto or Veridian, all these companies actually are losing money, because they get paid for the electricity they sell, and with conservation, they're using less. If they use less, they sell less, so their revenue is down and their expenses are up.

When I read this thing, I thought, gosh, this is an impressive memo from—this fellow's name is Myles D'Arcey, senior vice-president of customer operations. I read it. God, what choice do I have? It's a monopoly. Am I going to say no? I'll be in jail. I looked at it and I said, "Gosh, how come these prices are so outrageous for electricity?" Well, I went to the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act and the 2007 report. The fellow who signed this memo, Myles D'Arcey—I looked him up—makes \$489,121. Holy smokes. He makes three times more than the Premier, more than the Prime Minister, more than is necessary. I haven't seen him score a goal recently. I could operate a business if you gave me a 14% increase. I could do fairly well at that, I think, and I'm probably not as qualified as he is.

I read the paper and it says "Hydro Wallop Adds to Economic Pain." Mr. Runciman asked a question today, and he was dismissed by the Premier, shuffled off like it was an insignificant increase, just flipped away—10%. For people on a fixed income, this is just one more brick,

one more ticking time bomb. They've lost money in their pension. Who's going to bail them out? Probably the government and the Pension Benefits Act. Their house appraisal has come in, their tax bill is coming up, and the municipality will say, "It's Dalton McGuinty's fault."

This whole thing is really to deal with the burden on the people of Ontario that we're elected to represent. It isn't even political, really. In fact, I think we could both make the same arguments, if we were being honest about it.

So, Mr. McNeely, I think you're on the right track. It must be, because we already said in our plan—and it's already in the bill, so let's get on with it—the real issue here is the energy itself. It costs too much. Energy, in economic terminology, is price-inelastic. In other words, consumption doesn't vary much with price. In normal economics, the higher the price, the lower the demand. With this one here, I still have to cook the food, heat the house, whatever, do all these things—hot water baths. I guess you could have a shower in cold water. But my point is this: For this non-discretionary product for consumers, I think that it should be a flat rate, frozen over a longer term, for anyone using under 600 kilowatts. That's kind of a minimum. Then, after that, I can see an escalating cost.

These new smart meters aren't smart at all. They're time of use. With a smart meter I could phone home and turn on the dishwasher at night, or I could phone the cottage and turn off the hot tub. This one here is time of use. It's going to say that now that we've got three different rates, time of day, you're going to pay. In fact, this article goes on to say—here's a really good one—off-peak jumps 100%. Off-peak power used to be 2.7 cents per kilowatt hour; it's going to four. That's a 100% increase, roughly. These are the kinds of subtle, incremental jabbings of taxes, because electricity is a tax, by any other name.

We support the bill, and good luck, Mr. McNeely, if you get it past Dalton McGuinty in cabinet. That's the main thing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I should start off by saying that I'll be speaking in favour of the bill. I think the member from Ottawa-Orléans has done a public service by bringing this forward. I think the idea of having energy consumption audits makes sense in terms of consumers and in terms of their knowing what it's actually going to cost them in monthly payments to keep a house or an apartment going. Frankly, it's good for the environment because, hopefully, people will shop around a bit for a place that offers a better deal.

Having said that, and with no disrespect to the bill, it gives me an opportunity to talk about the larger context within which we are operating, the larger context of energy consumption and electricity planning that to some extent the member's bill addresses. I just wish that his approach were one that's being taken far more aggressively by the province as a whole.

We have a unique opportunity here in Ontario, a unique opportunity that could make us leaders in North America and globally if we were to take on energy efficiency in a very large scale-way. We could be a leader in developing a new energy economy in this country and on this continent, building new industries, creating new employment and protecting employment that we have.

Unfortunately, it's increasingly evident that the McGuinty government is not interested in taking advantage of this opportunity, and so it's no wonder that the member from Ottawa-Orléans has to step forward and put a bill before this House so that we can debate the kinds of issues, the kinds of steps that should be taken in this province. I believe, and the NDP believes, that the principal barrier to capitalizing on development of a new energy economy in this province is the government's lack of commitment to conservation and demand management, in fact, a lack of commitment to anything that is not business as usual with nuclear generation and investment in gas-fired generating plants. If the government doesn't correct its direction, if it does not move toward conservation and demand management, if it doesn't take this private member's bill and use it to build in other areas, then we here in Ontario will see substantially higher energy costs, increased supply risks and harmful environmental impacts, none of which anyone in this Legislature would stand up and say they wanted.

The Ontario Power Authority, acting at the behest of the Liberal government, acknowledges that it's pursuing only 65% of the conservation and demand management resources that are cost-effective and achievable. In other words, it's limiting itself. It could be doing a lot more with conservation and demand management. I assume that the Ontario Power Authority acts under the direction of the government and is not a rogue or a maverick agency out there making up policy as it feels like. Although I've heard bureaucrats argue otherwise, in the end I consider these bodies politically accountable. It's as if the OPA is awakening from a deep sleep, a 10-year sleep, and saying, "Okay, the world is the way it was in 1998. Nothing has really been learned about energy efficiency. Nothing has been learned about efficiency investment strategies. Let's continue as if we were back in the 1990s." That means this government and its bodies will probably replicate a number of the mistakes that have been made in the past about conservation and demand management. That is a huge problem for this province. It's a problem environmentally, it's a problem economically and, frankly, it's also a problem in terms of building relations with energy stakeholders, not just those who are interested in the energy industry as a business that they want to be part of, but energy stakeholders who are concerned about the impact of the energy industry on the environment, the population and on industry.

1420

In the NDP we think that a sustained, long-term reduction in energy demand based on best practices in other jurisdictions, including a much more aggressive

approach to conservation and demand management, is necessary here in Ontario. As it stands, the government's integrated power supply plan, our hydro strategy for the next few decades, underestimates Ontario's potential for conservation and demand management, and it does that in a number ways.

First of all, it is not accounting for currently identified and emerging energy efficiency technologies, ones that will be identified when people buy houses, apartments and condos that are rated under this private member's bill. There are improvements in lighting and cooling, in grid control systems, all kinds of changes that are coming forward on a daily basis because, largely, other jurisdictions are figuring it out. We here in Ontario don't have a lot of natural gas or oil. We import. Countries like Germany that are also big importers have figured it out and have hundreds of thousands of people working in the renewable energy and conservation industries.

I'm going to leave time for my colleague to speak to this, but I want to say that unless this province changes course and takes the development of a new energy economy as a central pillar in its economic strategy, it's going to face some very, very rough waters in the years to come.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's a pleasure for me to have the opportunity to speak and get a few words on the record in support of my colleague, the member from Ottawa-Orléans, related to Bill 101.

We've been very fortunate in the riding of Peterborough. I want to talk a little bit about the Peterborough Green-Up, which is under the direction of Sue McGregor-Hunter. Peterborough Green-Up has been a grassroots organization over the last decade or so. It does get support from the government of Ontario and the government of Canada. One of the things that they've been doing—I had my own house subject to one of their audits. They go out through the community, do energy audits for individual homes, and indeed, for businesses, and through that audit approach provide the opportunity for the individual homeowner or the business to take some corrective action in terms of improving energy efficiency not only for electricity but also for water consumption.

The member from Ottawa-Orléans is a man who has great experience in this area, a professional engineer, an individual who owned his own engineering firm in the Ottawa area, and I know during his time that he was a city councillor in Ottawa. This was a topic that he championed during those days as an Ottawa city councillor and since 2003 when he has had the privilege of serving the people from Ottawa in this chamber. I know, when you look at his record in Ottawa, he was a champion at the municipal level to bring forward some of these initiatives to really take the opportunity to reduce our energy consumption. We should all in this House on all sides certainly applaud him for these activities, because he knows exactly where this province needs to go.

I remind members, through our OPA report, of our demand for the next 20, 25 years. I know the Minister of Natural Resources is in the House today. As the former energy minister and, indeed, in a role as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy, she headed the conservation task force action team, she piloted a bill through this House and has certainly been a strong advocate on this particular topic and I look forward—I know she's speaking a little later during this debate, so she will get her thoughts on the record.

But the member from Ottawa-Orléans today has certainly made the compelling case why that needs to be done, and it's exactly true: Every kilowatt we save is a kilowatt that we don't have to produce, bearing in mind on each and every day, the province of Ontario needs 14,700 megawatts of base-load capacity. We're in the process of phasing out coal-fired generation in the province of Ontario. One of the ways that we can enhance that phase-out is through a very aggressive conservation program, which I think we've clearly identified through Peter Love and the work in his conservation role in the province of Ontario and indeed a number of policies that we've put forward.

We should all get on the train and support this bill from our fine colleague the member from Ottawa-Orléans.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate in support of the private member's bill that's come forward today from the member from Ottawa-Orléans. I've been amazed, in the past three or four years, at the response we've had from the public when we've asked them to respond to some of the energy needs and some of the changes that we're seeing taking place in the provision of energy in the province of Ontario. I think you can look around the globe and see examples of the same thing, but certainly there's a renewed interest from the people of Ontario and a very strong interest that they be allowed to partake of this in some way, that everybody seems to want to be able to do their share. When you look at companies like Bullfrog Power, the success they've had, when you look at Project Porchlight with the compact fluorescent lights and the impact they had on reducing our energy load right here in the province of Ontario, you really understand that people are really looking for ways to play their part.

Some of the things we've got used to in our own homes are the provision of energy ratings on appliances. When somebody buys a refrigerator or a stove or air conditioning, they always look at that label now. In the past, I'm not sure they paid an awful lot of attention to it. I think they pay a lot more attention today because they understand that there's a link between climate change and the individual actions that they take in their home. You're seeing people buy a larger number of hybrid cars, for example. People are prepared to do their share; they're prepared to do their part, but for some reason, to date—and I don't think this is anybody's fault, but

certainly it's the intent of the bill to rectify this situation—the largest purchase that most people will ever make in their life currently doesn't come with an energy rating. The bill, as it's proposed today, the private member's bill that's coming forward, Bill 101, would change that.

I think it's something that's worthy of the support of all members of the House, and other parties have said that they are prepared to support this. I think that's a very progressive move on everybody's part, because when you look at the carrying costs that are around the purchase of a home, it's one thing to buy the home in the first place; the other thing is to make that home affordable. If you're a young homeowner today and you're looking at some of the costs that are attached to new housing, it's one thing to figure out how you're going to get into the housing market; it's quite another thing to try to figure out how you're going to stay in the housing market, how you're going to be able to pay for the hydro bill, for the energy bill, for some of the other bills that accompany the purchase of a home.

What this does is it makes the purchase of a home a very transparent process. It's something that if you're a new homeowner, a new family and you're preparing to set a budget, you have all the information before you. You've got full disclosure about the carrying costs that are attached to that home. I can't help but think that that's a good thing.

When you look at our climate here in the province of Ontario, where we used to have a winter peak in the use of electricity—we now have two peaks. We've got a summer peak and a winter peak, and the summer peak actually exceeds the winter peak. Homeowners now are starting to look at things like geothermal. There's a renewed interest in solar and wind. People are starting to take up on that. Bullfrog Power, as I said before, allows people to make personal use of renewable energies that are being provided by people in the province of Ontario as we speak today.

So this, in my mind, is a very progressive bill that goes hand in hand with some of the other initiatives that have already been taken by our government to ensure that we have a safe, secure and affordable supply of electricity into the future.

People in Ontario know that a part of that plan is to ensure that we keep our stock in shape when we talk about such things as our generating capacity and that we conserve at the same time. We know that the demand is going to grow in the province of Ontario, but if we're able to grow at the same time that our individual demand is diminishing, then we can keep that energy supply at a level that's affordable to the people of Ontario. This allows people to make a very personal choice about how their energy costs are going to occur into the future. I think it's a useful tool and the member should be congratulated.

1430

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My colleague mentioned in his remarks the general support for the direction of the bill, but we also have some thoughts around how we can move forward in a quicker fashion in the province of Ontario. He did also already mention some of the suggestions that we have around conservation and demand management and why the Ontario government's plan currently is one that underestimates the conservation and demand management potential in the province of Ontario.

I think the first thing he mentioned, which I agree with, of course, is that the plan, as it sits, fails to account adequately for emerging and unidentified efficiency technologies. These technologies will provide increased efficiencies, and they continue to emerge; as every day goes by, we see improvements in things like lighting and cooling and grid control systems, and I know he has already touched on that.

There are another couple of issues that we needed to raise.

One was that energy costs have risen much faster in the province than many of the forecasts had predicted. As energy prices increase, of course, whether it's due to so-called market forces or due to new greenhouse gas regulatory costs, more conservation and demand management measures and more applications therefore become more cost-effective. It's a simple equation.

Higher energy prices also stimulate a new level of interest on the part of energy consumers making efficiency investments, and so you get that demand from the consumer based on that equation.

Thirdly, as demand for efficient technologies has grown, production costs simultaneously have begun to decrease. That lowers both the consumer and the programming costs. Compact fluorescent light bulbs, which were mentioned by the member from Oakville, are now much closer to the cost of incandescent lighting than they were a decade or so ago. In fact, energy-efficient refrigerators cost less today than their predecessors of the past, which were much more inefficient, as we all know. The cost of solar panels is another example. They have also dropped considerably in price.

The new delivery strategies can also accelerate conservation and demand management adoption to levels not previously experienced. CDM initiatives are using new marketing approaches that gain levels of adoption that were previously regarded as impossible. So you get, again, that increased demand which creates opportunity, definitely. So those are four of the points that we wanted to make around that issue.

I guess the final one would be that the integrated delivery of conservation and demand management creates many new opportunities. Deeper savings and better market penetration can often be accomplished by integrating conservation and demand management services rather than fragmenting them through a multitude of programs that are not connected to each other and that are not integrated. There is lost opportunity when programs are fragmented.

I did want to spend a little bit of time on another issue, which is the potential for combined heat and power. The government's proposed energy mix plan right now has failed to identify the true market for combined heat and power—CHP—has ignored the waste-energy recycling potential, and has offered no programs that would test either of these markets. I come from a city where there are huge amounts of industrial heat that is basically blowing up into the air, and that heat can be used to produce energy. It's a significant lost opportunity.

With respect to CHP, the government's energy mix plan fails to identify the potential to avoid transmission and distribution expenses and line losses by local generation of both heat and power and fails to address the substantial potential—about 3,000 megawatts—to recycle presently wasted industrial energy streams into useful heat and power that use no fossil fuel, emit no pollution and have the local generation advantages that I have already noted. It bases its recommendations on the wrong measures—those are the costs of power at the generation plant—instead of the right measure, which is the delivered costs of power. It refuses to test the market for clean energy by limiting long-term contracts to plants with generation capacity of less than 10 megawatts and not yet offering contracts to any local generation, even though that has been the stated goal for at least a year and a half now.

These biases and flaws undermine the OPA's and the government's conclusions and will result, in effect, in a reliance on dirty and costly coal generation in the province of Ontario. It will add inefficient peak savings, greatly deepen Ontario's bet on nuclear and raise the cost of local manufacturing, which drives jobs and profits out of the province.

By contrast, a strategy that's designed to capture clean, local energy will unleash a flood of creativity that will spawn new centres of excellence and create multiple benefits. I really do believe that the government is missing the boat, particularly when it comes to the capturing of waste heat. We see it every day in my community and in other industrial communities across this province. We need to get on that issue and take advantage of the energy potential that is blowing out of those stacks into the air and is not being captured at all and not being utilized. There are a lot of jobs in manufacturing the systems that will turn that heat into energy, and the government needs to get on the right page and make that happen. It would make a huge difference in terms of the mix.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The Honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: It's a pleasure to stand and to actually speak to the bill which we have in front of us, and to congratulate the member from Ottawa—Orléans to the effect that this bill, in fact, will make a significant difference. I would like to first of all congratulate those companies who currently do, in fact, exceed Energy Star ratings now. There are some 100 construction companies that are working hard in this respect, but as the member

from Oakville identified, it's not a mandatory requirement, so you're working on the goodwill of those companies.

Looking to states like Indiana, they use it as a marketing tool. In Alaska, 83% of their new homes are energy rated. In Vermont, they've actually included with their energy rating an efficiency around electricity rating as well. They get it combined where, in fact, they get a reduction on their electricity. This is an opportunity where we can work with the community to give them choice, to give them the knowledge that when they make the most important purchase in their lives—and their homes usually are, and it's for a long-term investment—they will know they have that choice.

Currently we give ratings to our hotels. We even give ratings to the meat we eat. Wouldn't it make sense to allow people to have choice and to make sure that when they buy the most important part of the legacy that they will maybe leave to their children—their home—that they know, in fact, what they are buying, and that it can and will and should exceed existing rated energy status? That's part of marketing and that's part of what we can do to ensure that they get the very best deal they can when they purchase their home.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Because of the time, just a couple of points.

First, congratulations to Mr. McNeely on introducing the Home Energy Rating Act, 2008. Secondly, Mr. Speaker, I want you to know that there are certain other jurisdictions which already have the basic issues of this bill organized. England already has it on its books, Germany is already being very progressive on this, and, as we just heard from our minister, there are certain states in the United States which follow the advice of the Home Energy Rating Act, 2008, already.

I was just very shocked when I saw a satellite photo of my riding of Davenport and, in fact, part of Parkdale—High Park. What this satellite photo showed was the energy loss, the heating loss, of homes. You could literally see plumes of energy being lost from the side of the houses, and sometimes where the roofs have not been insulated. You could see the red hot from the roofs being raised to high heaven. So these satellite photos were very important to see just how the energy rating could be applied and how we could do a much better job in terms of providing insulation to homes. I certainly would appreciate it if all members would support this bill because of its importance.

Finally, let me simply say this: that today, when Mr. McNeely organized a special meeting on this bill, it was said that the Canadian Energy Efficiency Alliance ranked Ontario in 2004 with a D; today, in 2008, the Canadian Energy Efficiency Alliance rates Ontario with an A. That's the progress of the McGuinty government. I want to congratulate our Premier and congratulate this government for moving in the right direction. Congratulations, Mr. Phil McNeely.

1440

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. McNeely, you have up to two minutes to reply.

Mr. Phil McNeely: First of all I'd like to recognize someone who's helped me a lot with this topic. I didn't realize he's up in the gallery here. Chris, thank you for attending the debate today. He's with an organization that is very much involved, and as a realtor, he sees both sides of the issue and understands it very well, what it does to home sellers as well as home buyers.

Thank you to the member from Durham. I would just like to say that the building code is there and people build to the building code. Now we'll be measuring the results, and the results are extremely important, because the one that just barely meets the building code—for the one that exceeds it, there'll be a difference and there'll be an advantage for them.

I would like to thank the member for Toronto-Danforth for his good comments; the members from Peterborough, Oakville and Hamilton Centre; and the Minister of Natural Resources, whom I worked for as a parliamentary assistant when she was Minister of Transportation, who always looked very much on the conservation side of transportation and really got a lot going in that ministry for conservation.

There's the member for Davenport, who's always on the side of consumers, and this is a bill for consumers, to protect consumers. It's about saving money; it's about having security for the future. You do your energy upgrades now, and that money comes back to you in a very few years. You have those energy savings as you go off into the future.

Certainly for people who are concerned about the economy, there's a tremendous area for retrofitting of homes. We could have a Marshall plan on retrofitting homes in areas where there is high unemployment, and certainly the jobs that come out of retrofitting homes are jobs that our people can do, they can do well, and it will be working towards having less energy costs and a better environment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): That concludes the time for this ballot item. For those with us in the chamber today and those watching at home, we will vote on this item in 100 minutes. There are two more ballot items to deal with.

FUEL SAFETY

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to thank you for the opportunity to move this resolution today, which reads:

In the opinion of this House, any review of safety standards for volatile fuels in Ontario should consider:

- ability of the enforcing authority to impose fines for breach of compliance;
- ability of the enforcing authority to track and maintain safety standards during a change of ownership;
- review of training procedures for the storage, handling, and transportation of volatile fuels;

- monitoring of administrative procedures and requirements, including adequate insurance coverage sufficient to deal with cleanups and damage to neighbouring properties;

- role of municipalities and fire services in site location, emergency planning, and identification of hazardous sites;

- transparency of inspection results and public notification of noncompliant sites;

- review of frequency of inspections and reporting requirements;

- institution of buffer zones and regulatory framework for the transition of new rules for existing sites.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Ms. Albanese moves private member's resolution number 52. Pursuant to standing order 97, you have up to 12 minutes for your presentation.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I rise today to bring to the attention of the House a variety of issues, with the intention of increasing the safety of residential neighbourhoods that are close in proximity to operations that handle volatile fuels.

I would like to welcome in the gallery Tim Beckett, chief of the Kitchener fire services, and vice-president of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs; Lori Hamer, also from Kitchener fire services; and Brian Patterson, president of the Ontario Safety League. They have all travelled here today to support this resolution and bear witness to our debate. So I want to acknowledge their attendance and thank them for their ongoing dedication.

Last August 28, the government announced a safety review of the storage, handling, location and transport of propane in Ontario. Two known independent experts in the field, Dr. Michael Birk and Mrs. Susanna Katz, have been appointed by Minister Takhar to review and make recommendations on how to improve propane safety in Ontario. The Ontario propane safety review is an excellent opportunity to address present practices and safety procedures in Ontario. The resolution which I bring forward today asks the House to build on that review, which focuses on propane, to engage in a discussion about the wider issues of volatile fuel.

The tragic Sunrise Propane explosion that occurred in Toronto on Sunday, August 10, 2008, brought a great deal of attention to the handling of volatile fuels. The northeast part of my riding of York South-Weston borders the Downsview site and is within the 1.6-kilometre radius that was under semi-evacuation immediately after the accident. The proximity of companies handling hazardous fuels has been a source of concern in the riding of York South-Weston for a much longer period of time. In January 2008, the explosion of a single fuel tank at a scrapyard on Hyde Avenue, in my riding, caused the injury of a worker. Several nearby homes were also damaged.

The Bloch family, who only recently moved into the area, was shocked that such a facility could be located so close to their home and have been concerned because they care for their grandson in their home. How can they

ensure his safety and how can they guarantee his right to play? Mr. Bloch is also concerned about other children in the area. "There are three schools within blasting range of the scrapyard. Do the authorities consider it acceptable that children should be endangered?" he asks.

This recent explosion is one in a series of repeated incidents over the course of several years. The January explosion was preceded by six fires on the same site since 1996. The residents of Westbury Crescent are looking for change in the way Ontario handles volatile fuels. Beyond this local example, this resolution has a wider scope and encompasses all similar situations across Ontario. The concerns of the residents of York South-Weston reflect the issues of community safety shared by all Ontarians, and we, as members of this House, have a duty to address these concerns.

The review of safety standards for volatile fuels in Ontario gives us the opportunity to give the enforcing authority the ability to impose deterrent fines for operators who are not complying with the highest standards of practice set out in the regulation. Currently, charges under the Technical Safety and Standards Act can be referred to the Ontario court system. That is to say, it is the court, not the regulatory authority, that imposes fines. Penalty provisions have not been changed since the act was introduced in 2000. For example, in the recent phase one re-audit of propane facilities, seven sites in Ontario were found to have non-compliances that constituted an immediate hazard. The sites were shut down until the hazards were corrected, but there is no evidence that the parties responsible for allowing the sites to fall into non-compliance will have to pay any significant fine. The regulatory authority should be able to levy fines that can act as a deterrent for faulty practices.

That brings me to change of ownership. In York South-Weston, industrial land use has existed alongside residential neighbourhoods for decades. It is not a question of choosing residential over other uses for a property; it is a question of being a good neighbour and always maintaining the highest standards of safety in any industrial operation.

Brian Patterson, who is here today, president of the Ontario Safety League, highlights the safe practices of several large propane-handling facilities across the province: "Within the industry and outside of the industry, good practices can be replicated and strengthen the reputation of the sector. For companies with a good safety record, compliance regulations are not a detriment to business, they are simply a part of the best way to operate the business." As a province, we must ensure that bad operators who have lost licences are prevented from being reissued certificates or licences. Therefore, it is necessary to track and maintain safety standards during a change of ownership.

1450

As some may remember, the issue of handling volatile fuels has been a concern to the residents of York South-Weston since 1986, when a propane gas explosion destroyed a Weston Road garage, injuring two workers.

The incident was likely precipitated by a leak from a cut fuel line which led to the explosion. The more recent explosion on Hyde Avenue is believed to have been caused by a worker puncturing a tank. Both of these cases bring to light the issue of training procedures for employees who work in a potentially dangerous workplace, handling volatile fuels. In 1986, the employee of the Weston Road garage was charged with failing to have a certificate of competence, despite the fact that, according to the rules, no person may handle propane unless the person holds a certificate or record of training for that purpose.

Today, the prevalence of subcontracted agents further complicates matters. Every site manager should verify the validity of the qualifications of any worker on-site. Instances where labour is subcontracted should also be looked at closely to ensure that only qualified workers are handling the volatile substances. Operators who choose to handle volatile fuels as part of their business should also carry sufficient coverage to deal with cleanups and damage to neighbouring properties, and this should be monitored. In the case of the explosion on Hyde Avenue, the residents whose properties were damaged could only make a claim for damages sustained through their own insurance, which would affect their rates. People should not have to absorb the cost of higher home insurance rates when they are not at fault.

Ontario's review should examine the role of municipalities and fire services in site location, emergency planning and identification of hazardous sites. Zoning in a particular area might allow a land use that is not well suited to the surrounding neighbourhood. Following the 1986 incident, the city of York passed a bylaw which the courts later ruled was outside their jurisdiction because it was concerned with safety provisions, not planning. When talking about safety, municipalities are an essential partner and must be part of that discussion.

Effective and frequent inspections are other important considerations. Ontario's practices are currently in line with other provinces, but having confidence in the inspection process requires more than regular inspections. The public must have every confidence that inspections are carried out by a force that is both adequate in number and highly skilled. Emergency response units such as firefighters are often the first to answer the call when accidents happen. Firefighters are a trusted source. They also possess much of the local and the ground knowledge that allows the public to have confidence in their ability to monitor volatile materials. Regular inspections by firefighters would be a good way to increase the public's confidence in the quality of inspections.

Transparency is also key. The inspectors' reports should be made public by the enforcing authority and posted on-site by the operators. In other words, they should be accessible to the public.

Current Ontario regulations also forbid propane tanks within 25 feet of a residential building and 300 feet of a school, and regulate the distance within an operating site of where the tanks can be stored in relation to buildings.

However, there are no specific regulations in regard to distances between a propane facility and buildings, residents, etc., located beyond the boundaries of a facility. These distances should be reviewed and a buffer zone should be considered. This practice is supported by the Canadian Chemical Producers' Association, whose members are expected to have a buffer zone. The CCPA encourages robust buffer zone controls by the competent authorities so that public protection cannot be compromised by local political pressure.

Residents agree. Vince Nicholson of York South-Weston believes that the institution of buffer zones, as proposed, would be a great step towards ensuring the safety of residents living near a dangerous industry, specifically those that have a history of accidents due to poor work practices that have directly impacted the safety of residents nearby.

Finally, the safety review currently being undertaken by the province should include establishing the time frame that municipalities would need to be able to transition from current regulations to implementing new buffer zone rules.

This statement concludes the points contained in the resolution I'm bringing forward today. I urge all members of the House to support this important resolution, which aims at increasing the safety of residential neighbourhoods that are in proximity to operations that handle volatile fuels.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm certainly very pleased to join the debate today on the private member's resolution entitled Safety Standards for Volatile Fuels in Ontario. That private member's resolution has, of course, been put forward by the member for York South-Weston in response to the very tragic Sunrise explosion that occurred in her community. Certainly, she can be assured of my support for this particular motion.

I think what this resolution does is bring to our attention a number of issues that will hopefully lead to increased safety and security of residential neighbourhoods when they are in close proximity to operations that do handle these very volatile fuels. If we go back to Sunday, August 10, 2008, when the explosion occurred, regrettably, one firefighter and one employee did die as a result, and certainly our sympathy goes to the families of those two individuals. It is also estimated that that explosion impacted approximately 10,000 people. That's a lot of people. That's why it is absolutely important to ensure that those people and the neighbourhoods where those people live are safe and secure. So we need to review what's going on.

I understand this wasn't the first time that the people in that particular neighbourhood became concerned about this issue; it has been a long time that they have been concerned about this particular issue. So this review is timely and certainly long overdue, and we should be responding to the concerns these individuals have. As I said, there were more than 10,000 people who were affected.

The cause of the explosion is still under investigation to this day. What we want to do is ensure that this resolution takes a look at a few issues when we look at reviewing it:

- the ability of the enforcing authority to impose fines for breach of compliance;

- the ability of the enforcing authority to track and maintain safety standards during a change of ownership;

- the transparency of inspection results and public notification of non-compliant sites;

- a review of frequency of inspections and reporting requirements;

- the institution of buffer zones;

- a regulatory framework for the transition of new rules for existing sites—I think that's certainly important as we look forward;

- a review of training procedures for the storage, handling and transportation of these volatile fuels;

- the monitoring of administrative procedures and requirements, including adequate insurance coverage sufficient to deal with cleanups and damage to neighbouring properties; and

- the role of municipalities and fire services in site location, emergency planning and the identification of hazardous sites.

If you're going to review the safety standards for volatile fuels, obviously these are some of the issues that need to be given consideration. I will tell you that when this explosion occurred, our leader and our party did what we could to encourage the McGuinty government to take immediate action in order to ensure that another such disaster would not occur anywhere else in Ontario.

1500

Some of our immediate recommendations were:

First, set up an information-and-help centre in the neighbourhood so that people can get accurate information from one source. I think if we hearken back to that day, and certainly subsequent days, there was some difficulty in people getting accurate information, so there should be an information centre available. Also, it can provide assistance to individuals who have been impacted.

Second, we recommended that funding be made available to help people who are out of pocket as a result of this disaster, and remember, a lot of people were displaced, and obviously a lot of people didn't have the resources to pay for that unexpected inconvenience.

Third, direct the Ministry of the Environment to immediately test the soil and the air for any toxic or dangerous substances.

Fourth, conduct a full review of the 911 call system. As many of the residents in that community reported, they could get no answer from the 911 call system the night of the explosion. So, again, obviously these individuals were concerned, they didn't know what was going on, and we need to make sure that that is reviewed.

Finally, provide daily reports on the progress of the inspections of propane facilities, which should be jointly carried out by the TSSA and a local fire department.

expert. We also recommend that very strict guidelines be implemented by the Ontario government in the event that another such disaster should occur.

I would say our party is deeply concerned about this issue, the devastation of the explosion and the loss of lives. We support this resolution. We would also recommend, however, that the McGuinty government accept its responsibility for oversight of the TSSA and implement an action plan in the wake of the Sunrise Propane explosions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I have to say first and foremost that the New Democrats are also wishing to indicate once again our concern and sympathy for the people who lost their lives and people who were injured in the explosion. It was a horrific thing to wake up to, to see the damage that was done. I really think it's important to acknowledge that, but for the time of day and the day of the week that this happened, it could have been a much more tragic disaster—not to say that it wasn't already a tragic disaster, because it certainly was. But I have to say that was the first thought that came into my mind when I was watching the events unfold and the media coverage, that this occurred at a time when most people were not awake—most people were still sleeping—and on a day of the week when it wasn't a matter of a workday, a regular Monday-to-Friday type of workday, where there would normally be people teeming on the streets by the thousands. I think we have to acknowledge that, first and foremost, because it was a disaster of significant proportion, but not as bad as it could have been. I think we have to reflect on that.

The reality is that the member from York South-Weston is likely bringing the resolution forward because the Ontario Propane Safety Review that they have put in place, that her government has put in place, produced a discussion paper that outlines a number of areas that they are prepared to examine. The shocking thing is that some of the most important areas that need to be looked at in regard to this situation, which is the role of municipalities and public disclosure requirements, for example, are not even listed as key areas that this review is going to examine.

One of the issues left off the lists of both the member from York South-Weston's motion and the Ontario Propane Safety Review is the very governance model of the Technical Standards and Safety Authority, the organization, we all know, that oversees provincial propane standards. So what we have done as New Democrats is to raise serious concerns about the TSSA since it was established by the Harris government. The TSSA is basically a self-regulating body. Most of its directors come from the industry itself. Only three of the 13 directors are appointed by the province; the rest of them come from industry. It's a clear conflict of interest. We're only learning right now about the real impact of this governance model, after the explosion has taken place. But we know intuitively, it's very clear, that you

cannot have the fox looking after the henhouse. That model simply does not work, and unfortunately this incident is the proof of that.

In response to public concern about propane safety, the minister ordered the TSSA to inspect all large propane facilities immediately. The TSSA did that, and uncovered non-compliance at about half of 196 large propane sites. Seven of those sites posed immediate hazards. If the explosion hadn't happened, Ontarians would not know and would not have known that there is a poor safety regime in this industry. So it is this disaster that has created this awareness that now makes it incumbent upon us to change the very system that is not providing public safety in terms of oversight of these types of propane storage facilities and other types of facilities.

Here is what we get in terms of the big, shocking revelation. When industry is charged with being its own watchdog, public safety is not the priority. It's fairly basic stuff. It's pretty basic. You cannot expect industry to monitor itself, to regulate itself, and to make sure that all of its pieces within that industry are living up to expectations in terms of public safety.

We know that the Harris Conservatives brought in the TSSA model, which is a fully self-funded organization, to cut costs and move this kind of work out of the government realm, basically trying to cut costs in the process of deregulating many of these kinds of activities. In so doing, what happened is, public safety was compromised. We end up in a situation where the organization is created, a self-regulated industry model, and government is basically siding with industry instead of siding with the interests of the public, and that is a very unacceptable situation.

At the time, the Liberal members who were sitting in their seats in this chamber opposed that move, they were vehemently opposed to this model, and now where are we? The Minister of Finance, who was there at the time, had to say at that time that the TSSA's responsibility for public safety is "not enough checks and balances within the system where we believe it's prudent for government to regulate." That was echoed by the current Minister of Transportation, who said, "In light of what we have seen happen in Walkerton and other communities, I know we would not want to turn that over to the private sector but maintain it in public hands, owned and operated by the people of this province."

We have responded as a party to the review that's ongoing. We raise all of those issues. I've sent a letter recently that says that in fact we want to see the model of governance reviewed. We want to look at whether or not it is appropriate. We want the review to look at whether or not it is appropriate to have this kind of governance model in place. We don't believe that that's the case. We think that the activities of the TSSA need to get back into the government realm, under the auspices of the Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services. That's where it needs to be. It needs to be directly the responsibility of government because it's related to the safety of the public and ensuring the safety of the public.

My colleague has other comments to make, and I know I will support everything that he says as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Mario Sergio: I am delighted to rise and speak in support of the bill. But, more so, I would like to compliment the member from York South–Weston for bringing this to the attention of the House.

I don't think there is a member in the House who would not support the intent of this particular bill. Of course, the member from York South–Weston has introduced this bill because she's extremely concerned about what may happen, not only in her own riding, because I know she's working very, very hard in seeing that indeed the review that is under way now will be bringing forward those recommendations necessary to hopefully avoid other disasters. But it's because of the concern that she has expressed during the Sunrise case, the explosion at Keele and Wilson where an entire neighbourhood—something like 10,000 people were affected, and were affected in a very adverse manner, let alone that the life of a young man, a young employee, was lost.

1510

Unfortunately, sometimes it does take a case like this to bring us to attention and to resolve to make changes to some of our laws. But if this is what it takes, I do hope that we can all support the intent of the motion and the conditions that the bill intends to have included in the review. We do hope that this, indeed, will save not only a lot of frustration for a lot of people, a lot of acrimony, but lives as well.

We have seen from the extensive coverage of the Sunrise situation the acrimonious debate and the finger pointing when things happen. Of course, no one wants to take the blame, but at the end we have to be concerned with the residents. In listening to the member from Hamilton Centre, Ms. Horwath, when she mentioned with respect to what's not included and what's included—I do hope that indeed some of the things that may not be included in the resolution here will be addressed extensively in the review, because this is going to come back to us and we will have other chances to make sure that the review will take into consideration every aspect to hopefully avoid the recurrence of the Sunrise situation there.

It's not only a review that is going through now, but it's what the member from York South–Weston says: These are the things that I'd like to see in this particular review, so we can move on and offer to communities all over the place—because they exist all over the place. In Toronto, Ontario, I have them in my own backyard. I have them about maybe 300, 400 yards from my particular home. I have gas stations with these propane tanks. It can happen anywhere, at any time. So I hope that we can all get together and say, "Yes, the review is very important."

I think what the review will include is even more important, and we can all offer our communities, our residents, some peace of mind that indeed measures will

be taken to curtail, to alleviate some of the concerns. Of course, by improving the methods, the handling, this will indeed bring some relief to the community and minimize the risk involved.

No one wants to see a repeat of Sunrise. I think it was very, very tragic. It has left an entire community in shock. I do hope that we can very expeditiously not only support this motion here but bring the final bill to the House and move on to provide the communities with the peace of mind that they deserve.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to add some input to the member from York South–Weston's bill that she's brought forward today. It's certainly a discussion that puts the safety and security of Ontarians at the forefront. There are numerous examples of unfortunate situations of fuel mishandling that have caused grave situations, and that's certainly the massive explosion at Sunrise Propane that's been mentioned many times here in the Legislature today. It certainly made it to print, and not just here, in Ontario and Canada, but also as far away as Scotland it was covered. So it's unfortunate that something like that had to occur and that we're having this discussion this afternoon. It's important that we do examine the events leading to the mishap and use it as a learning tool to go forward and ensure that our workplaces and communities are protected.

The member from Waterloo brought forward what John Tory and the PC caucus, after that tragic incident that happened at Sunrise Propane, would like to see occur. These were recommendations based on the safety and security of the people in the local community, but they apply to all corners of the province of Ontario. While propane combustion is much cleaner than gasoline, proper care and handling of this gas and all volatile fuels is very important. It also includes protection and proper education of those who work and who are interested in working in the industry.

In 2005, I introduced a private member's bill that was intended to address the need for a new apprenticeship program in the province of Ontario in the fuel industry. It was the first step in gaining recognition for a new apprenticeship program. It came from small business owners in my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, and planned to assist them in getting and providing employment opportunities for young people who were eager to join the industry as a trade. It was the intention to create the industry committee that would be known as the fuel industry technician advisory committee. The committee would act as a voice and representative for gas-and-oil-burner fitters and fuel technicians. Fleming College, which I share with the member from Peterborough in my riding, a training provider with fuel technician courses, told me that the trade needs to be supported by apprenticeship training. This all went through the proper legislative channels. It got royal assent. It is a safety measure. The use of natural gas and oil touches all our lives on a daily basis. So it was im-

portant that this apprenticeship trade get up and go. Unfortunately, we haven't seen that apprenticeship develop. I would hope that they would look at this now differently and make some expedient moves on that matter, because it is about public safety. I know that TSSA is involved in moving it forward, or maybe not moving it forward.

I know that the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills would also like to add some comments, so I'll leave him time to discuss TSSA.

We certainly are in support of this motion today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I want to thank the member for bringing forward this resolution. I also want to acknowledge councillor Maria Augimeri and the work that she did in her community, bringing comfort to her constituents after that explosion.

The simple reality is that time and time again, our society assumes that a deregulated environment is one that works and that dangerous or problematic issues can simply be left to the care of those who are immediately interested in the business of providing services.

Harland and Wolff, a very famous shipbuilding company, launched a very famous ship, the Titanic, that was unsinkable and didn't put enough lifeboats on. Not putting enough lifeboats on, in my mind, is tantamount to deregulation: a thought that everything will be fine because great minds have figured things out.

We do need to re-examine the rules around fuel safety in this province and, frankly, we need to reinstitute a government-controlled, government-directed regulatory body that actually enforces those rules. Leaving this whole matter to private industry to regulate itself is a mistake. That has been demonstrated quite clearly here.

I think that we should recognize that there are still a lot more questions that have to be dealt with. The member from York South-Weston points out this isn't the first time that we've had an assessment of fuel safety. In 1986, an explosion at an illegal taxicab repair shop caused extensive damage to the surrounding area. Luckily, at that time there were no deaths. The minister responsible for consumer affairs at the time said that he was pleased to announce, in cooperation with the Ministry of Energy, a government-industry committee with consumer representation to examine all aspects of siting for facilities for dispensing alternative transportation fuels such as propane and natural gas. That was May 1987, and the minister then was Monte Kwinter, Liberal member for York Centre. The committee was struck. It delivered its report in March 1988 and outlined their findings. A second report detailing the committee's recommendations was to follow, but it never got to that stage. We now have a new minister committing to review the issues that the minister 20 years earlier made commitments to, but never followed through on.

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The resolution today gives us an opportunity to revisit the issue and look again at what we have before us.

Frankly, it is no wonder that people get extraordinarily upset with politicians when we talk, but in the end the action on the ground doesn't appear.

What we need is a follow-through from this government so that we won't have, five years from now or 10 years from now, another startling and disastrous propane explosion, or an explosion of another kind of energy that people could have foreseen but did not put in place the regulatory system to actually ensure that populations were protected.

We should recognize that there are some things in the world that are called "normal accidents." If you have planes—out of thousands, one of them is going to crash. If you have explosive materials being handled at a site, from time to time you will have explosions. It's crucial, recognizing that, that there are adequate buffer zones. It's crucial, recognizing that, that you have a very rigorous regulatory system so that you reduce the number of these events to the absolute minimum possible. You may never get to zero, but if you don't consistently strive to have a system in place that ensures a very high level of care, a very high level of precaution, a very high level of investment in good practice, then effectively you set the stage for the next Sunrise Propane explosion.

Most of us will not be in the House at that time. Most of us will not be here to speak to this issue. But I want to say to you today that this Legislature has to take whatever recommendations come forward, and if they don't include a reinstitution of proper regulatory authority by the government, that has to be put in place.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: First, I want to commend the member from York South-Weston for bringing such an important resolution to this House to be debated this afternoon.

I guess everyone in this province, maybe across Canada, maybe across the world, was watching not long ago the explosion at the Sunrise facility in York region, and everybody was shocked to see that big, huge flame and many people being evacuated. Of course, it cost a life and caused a lot of damage to properties. I think it's very important in this place to discuss those important issues, to make sure all the facilities across the province of Ontario are in a safe condition. I think the member from York South-Weston brought in this resolution today to create awareness and also to submit recommendations.

I was listening to all the members from both sides of the House supporting the resolution and also adding to the recommendations, because the most important thing for all of us in this place is to make sure all the population in the province of Ontario live in a safe environment.

Also, the member from York South-Weston brought up very important steps, talking about inspections, talking about having licensing, talking about buffer zones between the facility which stores propane or any hazardous materials and the population. I think those are very

important steps. She was talking about the people who work in this area, if they don't follow the rules and they lose their licence as a result of not following the rules, they shouldn't be given a licence again, because it's very important that if a person has a history of bad practice, I think they shouldn't be honoured to be able to practise the same business again, because in this matter we cannot put our population at risk.

She was also talking about buffer zones. I didn't know, before I started reading this bill and listening to many different speakers, that there's no regulation in the province of Ontario that recommends or forces people who store propane or fuel to be a certain distance from populated or residential areas. I was shocked. I think it's very important to implement those recommendations in order to make this environment very safe.

As we hear in this House, many different speakers spoke many different times about regulations and about safety. I think our government has taken a very important step toward this issue. As we mentioned, it doesn't matter what we do: We still need more in order to make sure all our facilities across the province of Ontario are safe and all the people who live near those facilities are safe.

Also, a very important recommendation by the member from York South–Weston talks about the lack of communication between the facilities, the municipalities and the province. I think there was no communication between all these people who are in charge of making those places safe. It's very important to bring this issue forward in this place, to implement those recommendations to create a safe environment for the people who live in this province.

Before I finish, I want to assure that people on both sides of the House are working around the clock to make sure that laws and rules are implemented in this province in order to make life safe. I want to commend the member from York South–Weston again for bringing such an important issue to this House, and I hope all the members will support it. I'd like to see those recommendations implemented. It's not good just to talk about them; it's very important to implement them and make them law. The lives of the people are important to all of us and important to all the people who live in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I can't but say I fully support this resolution to look at this issue in more detail. I was the minister when the TSSA was set up as a self-management entity. It's not a self-regulating entity. The minister responsible for this particular entity makes the regulations, and they manage them. Also, on the board of the TSSA is a senior bureaucrat of the minister responsible for the TSSA, who sits as an ex officio member of that board and is fully aware of what the board is doing.

Notwithstanding that, there's no question that, as time goes by, these particular parts of the government should be viewed and their actions should be looked at and the regulations should be looked at if they are not up to date,

after experiencing a tragedy such as we had with regard to this propane explosion.

I fully support this, but let's not be under the notion that this is something run by big business out there on its own. This is under the tight control of the minister. The minister can yank their whole organization at his will. That's the agreement between the government and the TSSA. They have done good work in the past, but that's not to say their work doesn't need to be sharpened up. I fully support this review.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I want to congratulate the member for York South–Weston, who is an incredible advocate for her community, raising issues that matter to her constituents and their families.

If I may, I'd first like to join with others around the House who have expressed condolences to the families that were severely and tragically affected by the occurrence in August of this year. At the extreme, lives were lost and there were injuries, but there were also many families across the city of Toronto—constituents of the member's and beyond—whose lives were negatively affected by this incident. I think it highlighted for many people the importance of protections that are put in place to make sure our communities are safe.

I know that I had an opportunity to speak in my own community about this issue, because it heightened concern and awareness with respect to those businesses that might be operating in communities, especially in urban centres where we live very close to industry, and how we might be able to collectively do better to ensure that our communities are safe. I think that what is transpiring around the House today is a collective desire to work together to make sure our communities are safe and that we put in place the protections that continue to do that.

I know that the member for York Centre also has something he would like to add to this debate, and I will leave him a couple of minutes to do that. Again my congratulations to the member for York South–Weston. I'm pleased to be supporting her in this important debate.

1530

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I want to add my support of the member from York South–Weston's resolution and say that I absolutely will be supporting it. The propane explosion took place in my riding. One of the things that was really brought home to me—I attended all of the press conferences, and I was there the morning after the Sunday morning, and all of the officials had the same message—is that it was a miracle that, because it happened at 4 o'clock on a Sunday morning, there wasn't more carnage, more loss of life and more damage. I said then, and I'm going to say it now: I don't think it's acceptable that people have to rely for their safety on a miracle. They have to hope that a miracle happens so that they in fact are protected.

I think that all levels of government have to make sure that sufficient regulations are in place to make sure that if

a disaster happens, the impact on the residents in a particular area is kept to a minimum. That can only be done by taking a look at what we are doing and making sure that we tighten up several things. The zoning, one of the big issues in that particular site, was such that, notwithstanding that the zoning permitted the use of a propane storage facility, the residents had no say. They had no choice to question it and to decide whether or not this is what they wanted. They suddenly found out one day that it had gone from being a used-car lot to being a major storage facility, storing hazardous materials. I don't think that is acceptable and they don't think it's acceptable. Anything we can do as a government to take a look at what is happening, and to make sure that sufficient buffers are in place for these facilities, is something we should support. I'm just pleased to be here speaking in support—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Ms. Albanese, you have up to two minutes to reply.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I want to thank all the members for their comments and for their support. I want to thank the members from Kitchener–Waterloo, Hamilton Centre, York West, Halliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, Toronto–Danforth, London–Fanshawe, Carleton–Mississippi Mills, Etobicoke–Lakeshore and York Centre. Thank you very much for supporting this resolution.

I just want to take a moment to reiterate the reasons why I decided to bring this forward. The Sunrise explosion was tragic. There was loss of life. I also want to add my name to condolences to the families of the victims. Eight months before that, residents in York South–Weston had come to see me. They had had a smaller explosion; there was one worker injured. They asked me, “Do we have to wait for a tragedy to happen?” I had started to do some research to see what could be done. Of course, the Sunrise tragedy then brought all of this forward. This, again, is an opportunity for us, for the government, to review all the rules and regulations that we have in place. I want to commend Minister Takhar for ordering this review that the government is undertaking. I hope that many lives will be saved in the future. We can do that. We have the power to do that. We have to look at prevention, look at how these incidents are prevented from happening again and again. It broadens the conversation about the proximity between residential and industrial areas. One should not exclude the other, but the rules have to be properly reviewed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): That concludes the time for that ballot item. We will vote on that item in 50 minutes' time.

WASTE REPORTING ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LES RENSEIGNEMENTS À FOURNIR CONCERNANT LES DÉCHETS

Mr. Sousa moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 105, An Act respecting the reporting of industrial, commercial and institutional waste to facilitate the

establishment of waste reduction targets and to promote recycling / *Projet de loi 105, Loi traitant des renseignements à fournir sur les déchets industriels, commerciaux et institutionnels afin de faciliter l'établissement d'objectifs en matière de réduction des déchets et de favoriser le recyclage.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Sousa, pursuant to standing order 97, you have up to 12 minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Charles Sousa: It is a privilege to rise to talk about Bill 105, the Waste Reporting Act.

Today in Ontario the industrial, commercial and institutional sector generates 60% of Ontario's garbage. That amounts to eight million tonnes of waste each and every year. Of that waste, only about 12% is recycled. This is a major concern for me and to many in this House.

In our homes we separate our recyclables through the blue box program. We know that when those recyclables are picked up, they will go to a recycling facility. However, if recyclables are separated at a mall or office tower, hospital, school, construction site or any other ICI location, we cannot be so certain. When recyclables are picked up from that site, they may be recycled; they may end up in a landfill. A waste hauler can take them to either, because they're under no real obligation to recycle. Many businesses have contracts with waste haulers for recycling pickup, and many are paying for that service. They would be shocked, however, to know that their recyclables are not always being processed.

This is why Bill 105 is so important. The Waste Reporting Act will require waste haulers and waste disposal facilities to track and report the amounts of ICI waste that they handle. They will have to report how much recyclable waste they process and how much of it actually gets recycled. This simple step is vital. With this information, we'll be able to set meaningful targets for ICI waste reduction in Ontario and effectively monitor progress. In fact, reducing the amount of waste that goes to landfill and increasing the amount that gets recycled is the ultimate goal of this legislation. Tracking ICI waste is just the first step toward achieving this.

Today we know very little about where ICI waste goes. Recently I sent every member of this House a package that asked a question: “The ICI sector generates eight million tonnes of waste every year. How much of it gets recycled?” As you may recall, the simple answer is, no one knows. But there are estimates. Of the eight million tonnes of waste generated by the sector every year, a mere 12% is recycled. The rest, of course, ends up being disposed of, and usually in a landfill. We ought to know why, and how much, plastic gets dumped into landfill. We ought to know how much glass gets dumped into landfill. We ought to know how much textiles get dumped into landfill.

Recyclable paper, for example, is the single greatest component of ICI waste, yet much of it gets dumped instead of recycled. When paper, a valuable commodity, does go to be recycled, there are often problems with

contaminated loads. For example, when paper is mixed with bits of plastic and/or other waste, it is often difficult to separate them. This can result in loads of recycling being rejected in Ontario industries and by Ontario industries. Contaminated loads of paper, plastic or glass may then be sent abroad to be recycled where labour is cheaper. Often the recycled material is then imported and sold back to Ontario businesses. All of this, however, represents only a modest quantity compared with the amount of material that goes straight to landfill. This can and should change.

If all the recyclables sorted by businesses were delivered, as is, to recyclers, that would be a big improvement. We need to be recycling more, here at home, to help create jobs here at home. But first, we have to figure out where all our waste is going and how much of it is being sorted.

We think that only about 12% of ICI recyclables are being processed, meaning that a large portion still goes to dumps and landfills. About 40% of that is being exported to the United States, mostly to Michigan. Currently we also send municipal waste to Michigan, but we've committed to stop shipments by 2010. So what does this mean for ICI waste? Could the single largest recipient of Ontario's ICI waste decide they don't want it any more? Where would that leave Ontario? I don't think we can afford to wait to find out.

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Municipalities all across Ontario have had systems in place for maximizing recycling and minimizing waste for years. These systems are constantly improving, and we're seeing results. That said, the final destination for municipal waste is still a dump or a landfill. Because municipalities rely on them, Ontarians' property tax dollars often pay for the purchase and maintenance of municipal landfills. Every time we fill a municipal landfill with recyclables, it limits our ability to dispose of other waste, which ultimately costs taxpayers. Ontarians might be surprised to learn that recyclable ICI waste can end up in these landfills as well. This is another reason why we have to make sure that ICI recyclables are properly diverted.

Our goal should be to drastically increase the amount of recycling that is done in the province of Ontario, and this legislation is a big step in that direction. We have an opportunity now to do something good for the environment. We can keep waste out of our landfills, extend the life of our landfills, and at the same time help grow a greener economy. After all, if we want to do more recycling, we need to grow our recycling industry. That means infrastructure build, that means more raw materials available for our manufacturers and it means more jobs.

Requiring the tracking of ICI waste is a necessary first step in achieving this long-term vision, and the experts agree. I've heard from industry representatives and stakeholders from varied backgrounds, and they are in agreement: In order to reduce waste, we must first track waste. Among those I met with in preparing this bill were

representatives from the waste industry. They've told me that they welcome tracking requirements, because there are many in their industry doing their part and they all want industry members to operate to the same high standards. Tracking requirements will ensure a level playing field.

I was also encouraged to learn that, as an industry, they are ready to assume a greater role in increasing diversion. They recognize that because recycled goods are a commodity, they have value. They understand, as we do, that in the 21st century, protecting our environment can make good economic sense.

While industry will need to harmonize their existing waste-tracking systems to accommodate the requirement of this legislation, they know that as recycling grows, so too will business.

In the months leading up to today's debate, I heard from environmental stakeholders as well. I was surprised to learn that our recyclers often find themselves without a steady supply of materials. Often, supplies of plastic, paper or metals can fluctuate greatly. Without a steady and sufficient input of recyclables, they say, the growth of the recycling industry has stagnated. With so much waste going to landfill every year, it seems to me that this is something we can address. Jo-Anne St. Godard, executive director of the Recycling Council of Ontario, says, "To develop effective policies and programs to improve diversion in this sector, we need verifiable data. RCO fully supports the intent of this bill."

As mentioned before, there is consensus among the experts: Tracking waste is the first step. It will provide a better understanding of what is going on in the waste disposal industry. With that data in hand, we can then set targets for increased diversion and monitor progress. We will be better able to divert recyclables away from landfills and towards Ontario's recycling facilities. We'll be in a better position to know who's diverting and, more importantly, who is not. And as targets are set, the tools necessary to assess progress will already be in place.

In addition to the obvious environmental benefits of increased diversion, a green Ontario industry will be getting a significant boost. Tracking waste from pickup to sorting to final destination is key to better understanding how Ontario deals with its garbage. This legislation, if passed, will give us the ability to do just that.

Of course, the information generated will only be useful if it is accurate, and that's why there are provisions in this legislation to allow for inspections. Tracking ICI waste from collection to disposal means that reporting will come from only approximately 200 points of contact. Inspectors could request verification in order to determine the accuracy of the data submitted. This would give us the means to ensure that the information we receive is accurate.

Of course, the most effective way to divert recyclables is to sort them at the source. Under the Ontario Environmental Protection Act, many businesses and institutions are required to create waste reduction plans. Following these plans, many businesses already sort the recyclables

on-site. Since these materials are already sorted, the work of a recycling facility is made quicker and easier. What Bill 105 will do is track those sorted and unsorted materials, telling us how much actually gets recycled.

Accurate waste-tracking information is absolutely necessary in order to achieve our greater goal of increasing recycling and growing a greener economy. The bottom line is, we need to know where our ICI recyclables are going. This bill will find the baseline, the point from which we can measure progress. It answers the question: Where is ICI waste going? Once we find that out, we can begin to move forward in the right direction.

Today, the Ministry of the Environment will release a discussion paper on the Waste Diversion Act entitled *Toward a Zero Waste Future*. I believe that this bill, Bill 105, will serve as a critical first step towards that goal, a bold vision set out by the minister. I am proud of this bill.

At this time, I wish to acknowledge and thank my staff, who were diligent in its preparation. I very much look forward to hearing from my colleagues from all parties in this debate. I know that everyone in this House feels as I do: that protecting our environment and growing the green economy in Ontario are the right things to do. There's an expression: "What gets measured gets done." As you may know, next week is Waste Reduction Week. Today, let's not waste this opportunity to move forward to do the right thing for our environment and our economy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: This issue is near and dear to my heart because of the attempt by a waste management corporation to expand a landfill site in a very populated area of Carleton-Mississippi Mills on the Carp Road. The Carp dump is very close to a residential area. Over the past two or three years, the local residents have suffered from the odours from that particular facility. We were very much aggrieved to find out that the former city council of Ottawa was in bed with the waste management corporation for expansion plans. This was not told to the local residents, and as a result, we've had a change in the councillors who represent that area. So my interest in ICI waste comes from that local concern, as well as the city of Ottawa recognizing that ICI waste is one of the biggest problems we have with diversion and the landfill capacity that we presently have and making it last a longer time.

In 2004, this government, the McGuinty government, promised a diversion rate of 60%. Nothing has happened since that date. The diversion rate is the same as it was in 2004. As evidenced by the member for Mississauga South's material given to us today, using his estimations, only 12% of the 60% of the waste that is produced by the ICI sector is diverted, and we believe that around 35% to 38% of the residential solid waste is diverted. We come out with about a 25% overall diversion rate in Ontario of solid waste. That's with this government promising, in 2004, a diversion rate of 60%. They have done nothing;

they ought to be absolutely ashamed of their efforts on this environmental issue.

I want to congratulate the member for bringing forward the issue, though. I believe that the member for Mississauga South should be praised, not denigrated, for his efforts here.

However, I want to say to the member for Mississauga South that knowing how much is going into the landfill sites in various categories will not solve the problem. What we need is aggressive legislation by this government to do what they did in Nova Scotia: say to the people who are providing the solid waste, both residential and ICI, "We will not have organics go into the landfill site." If you do that, the people who produce this waste, whether it's residents of Ottawa or of any other place, or businesses of any other place, such as restaurants, which are part of the ICI waste, will have to find other solutions. There are other solutions at this very moment being built in the province of Ontario to take care of organic waste, and so we can ask those people to do it. In Nova Scotia, you can't put corrugated cardboard or paper into a landfill site. So it's controlled at the landfill site door.

I want to also point out that I support the idea of having some knowledge of what is happening at the landfill site's door with regard to recyclables. I therefore support, for instance, section 3 about the person who operates a waste disposal site. But I would draw the member for Mississauga South's attention to the 2007 auditor's report with regard to hazardous waste, where the Auditor General points out that the Ministry of the Environment is not able to track hazardous waste in this province. He says in his report that they can't keep track of the people who are hauling it, there is very little accuracy with regard to the records that they are keeping, and they have been unable to implement an electronic manifest system for a period of 10 years, even proceeding this previous government, and they're dealing with 340,000 tonnes of waste. Your bill tries to cover eight times that amount of waste with people who are probably less skilled and less managed than those who are hauling hazardous waste. So I have a very difficult time in supporting section 2 of the bill where you are requiring carriers to record all of this information, not because I don't think it is a good idea, but because our history in the province of Ontario with regard to hazardous waste has shown that it's an impossibility. It will not happen. So let's try to do things which we can in fact have some possibility of implementing. That's why I would support, perhaps, section 3 of your bill, which puts the responsibility on those running the landfill sites to record how much is coming in, what kinds of things are coming in, what things are being recycled and are not being landfilled—what are and what are not.

The other part of this is that I feel that when you enter into and set some new obligations for those people dealing with solid waste in our province, we should ask them or want them to buy in. I find that the penalties are probably too high for the kind of regime that you are

setting up. Basically, what you are saying is that some responsible company or whatever could be fined \$10,000 to \$50,000 if they didn't keep a record. Well, we know that that kind of penalty will probably never be implemented and there will probably never be any kind of charges laid. Basically, I think those penalties should be much, much less.

Secondly, one of the things that I think all legislators have to do with regard to the powers given to enforcement people is to make them reasonable with regard to the problem that you're trying to approach. You're suggesting here that we want records kept of how much garbage is this kind and that kind and whatever. I suggest to you that there would not be much resistance by those people who are running landfill sites to give you that information and try to do the best that they can to keep that information. But in your bill, you give whoever is enforcing this the right to enter without a warrant, far overreaching the kind of authority you necessarily have to give the inspector or the person who is involved in this.

We should be very careful, with any kind of inspector, in giving that kind of right, the right of entry without warrant. Police don't have the right to enter people's homes without a warrant in most circumstances. Therefore, I don't believe that we should give those kinds of power out willy-nilly, particularly with regard to a situation where you are saying you're going to go in and inspect these records, which I believe will be kept. If somebody refuses—there's a really bad actor who runs a landfill site somewhere—well, most of this would be done during the day, presumably. It wouldn't be done in the middle of the night or whatever it is, and it's very easy to obtain a warrant from a justice of the peace or whomever if that is necessary.

My concern with this bill is whether in fact it could be implemented with regard to the carriers. I don't believe it could be. I do support the idea of requiring those people in the landfill site to keep some records and to have the right of inspection, but I believe that can be done in a co-operative fashion. I think your penalties are far too onerous for the kind of crime that would be created by not keeping records of something that was demanded of this particular person.

Those are my comments with regard to the bill. I must say, though, that because of the impracticality of what you're suggesting with regard to the carriers—25 times as much waste here as with regard to hazardous waste, and the Ministry of the Environment can't do the job with regard to hazardous waste, a mere 340,000 tonnes of it—I really believe that it is an impractical part of the legislation. But I will say this, that either I or some future government will take a really active role, and if I am part of a future government, I will insist that my party take an active role in dealing with this question once and for all. And it has to be either through legislation—like we have witnessed in Nova Scotia, where you just say, "You aren't going to bring certain items into landfills, wherever they are in Ontario." Quite frankly, that's the

main issue that we have here. I worry to some degree about what goes outside of the province—yes, I do—but I think that is up to Michigan to decide what goes in their landfills and what doesn't. I'm more concerned with what goes into our landfill sites and preserving what little landfill site space we have so that we can elongate that and we do not have to go to communities like Stittsville and Carp and say to them, "You must have a larger dump than in our area," because we have been so negligent in reaching diversion goals, as we have in this province of Ontario under the McGuinty government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: First, I should say to the member from Mississauga South that I thank him for bringing forward the issue. It has been interesting to me in my brief time in this Legislature to watch backbenchers bring forward private members' bills as a way of trying to take on the big issues of the day, which I have to say should largely be addressed by the governments that they are part of. I know that when you bring forward your private members' bills, you don't bring them forward as an implicit criticism of the Premier or the cabinet. But, frankly, when I look at the problems before us and I look at the scale of issues that have to be taken on, when you bring forward these small steps, it illuminates the fact that the large issues are not in fact being addressed.

1600

The member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills spoke. Not always did I agree with him, but he raised some issues that I think are very appropriate to consider when we look at the piece of legislation before us. This is an appropriate—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Sorry. You know who I'm talking about, Mr. Sterling.

It is an appropriate time to have a bill to talk about reducing industrial, commercial and institutional waste. As was noted, it's national Waste Reduction Week. We have a serious waste problem in this country. Ontario has a serious lack of a plan to take on the waste issue.

I was sitting in this Legislature in the last session, and we talked about waste reduction a lot. I understand there was a discussion paper that came out in 2003, you said—2004—on 60% waste reduction. That paper gathered an awful lot of dust. There were layers, strata of dust on top of that paper, and every researcher who tried to get at it had to shovel for a while before they could get at the words. It was a very distressing situation. I would come out and raise questions here to the Minister of the Environment at the time and ask, "Why are you not helping these smaller municipalities and some larger ones set up composting programs, keep their composting buildings open?" Given the fiscal constraints at the municipal level, they weren't able to maintain the system that had to be maintained or they didn't have the money to expand the system that needed to be expanded. If there is a new discussion paper coming forward on zero waste, I would hope that the dust has been adequately shaken off the old discussion paper before this one is opened.

We need more than research when it comes to the waste issue. We need action. It's interesting to me when it's been mentioned that Nova Scotia has taken the action they have. Nova Scotia is not one of those jurisdictions that do really radical things when it comes to public policy. They're pretty practical folks. And you're right, they do ban certain substances from the landfill. In fact, it would make sense to say in this bill—and I think it would have far greater effect—that no organic waste goes to landfill: no ICI waste, no restaurants, no food courts, no hospitals, no colleges or universities. The lot has to be composted. We wouldn't get into the difficulty, and the example you cited was a very good one, of keeping records, because if we aren't keeping records now on hazardous waste—if I remember that auditor's report correctly, something like 10% of the toxic waste that's shipped out never reaches a destination; it disappears. I may be misquoting. Someone can check that at another point. But if we're not keeping records on toxic and hazardous waste now, I'm concerned. In fact, I don't feel great confidence that we would keep track of non-toxic waste.

I would say that when it comes to this bill, I'm glad the member has brought it forward, but I would hope that within his caucus there would be much greater pressure for concrete steps to actually deal with the problem, which has been largely researched over the years. People know generally what the waste composition is. People know what can be recycled, what can be diverted and what can be composted. That is where the government needs to start.

Again, I understand that the role of the backbencher is one that means they don't get a chance to shape government direction. They use private member's bills to actually put things on the floor and create the debates that are necessary. When we look at some heavy-duty resource materials like the school kit for National Waste Reduction Week—I take it as a fairly straightforward source: In Canada, people create 31 million tonnes of waste a year. That's 2.7 kilograms a day. Forty per cent of the waste is produced in homes; 60% comes from commercial, industrial and institutional. We aren't very good at reducing our waste; we generate a whole lot. We're creating problems for generations to come after us.

Even though I appreciate the sentiment and the direction the member has taken on this bill, I'd say that, far more importantly, we have a government before us that should start acting on the discussion paper it brought out a number of years ago. That would be a very good starting point.

I'm going to wrap up here and leave the rest of the time to my colleague.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate. Certainly, I'll be speaking in favour of the private member's bill that has been put forward today by the member from Mississauga South. I think it's a bill that's going to advance the cause of recycling in Ontario, and

that's something that I think everybody in this province would like to see.

I guess you can use private members' time as an opportunity to criticize the government. When you do that, however, you open yourself up to criticism. I'll take advice on the environment from a number of people like Environmental Defence and groups in my own community like Oakvillegreen. David Suzuki is somebody I admire for his advice. But I'm not sure I'll be taking advice from the previous Conservative government on how to run either a good Ministry of the Environment or how to clean up the environment.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Our diversion rate was better than yours now.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: The track record is clear, despite the heckling from over there: For eight years they cut back on environmental protection. It meant air you couldn't breathe and water you couldn't drink in this province. There were cuts to water inspectors and testing. When you mention the word "Walkerton," I know that everybody gets a sick feeling in their stomach, and they should. When you look at the track record of both governments, and perhaps even go back to the Peterson government, you could say that everybody could have done more. Certainly you've got a member today who has stood up and proposed what I think is a progressive move.

I had the opportunity last night to speak to the student union at the University of Toronto at Mississauga, specifically about environmental issues. They asked this very question. They said, "We're doing a lot in our school and doing a lot at home, but what is happening in the business world? Where are the recycling initiatives we're seeing in our own homes? Why are they not being carried on in the ICI sector?" There were people there who organized the event, like Marijana Josifovska, the vice-president, and Tooba Shakeel, the sustainability coordinator. Purva Kulkarni, from a group called RiskCheck, which does environmental health and safety risk management for companies, was there, wondering why companies spend an awful lot of time examining the risk to their health and safety but don't seem to spend an awful lot of time on recycling and the environmental issues that affect their company. I said I would bring that up today, knowing that I would be speaking to the bill of the member from Mississauga South.

I think that any meaningful change we've had in our society in the past 20, 30 or 40 years has been done by young people. When you look at smoking, when you look at recycling, when you look at drinking and driving, young people have led the way on all those changes. I think the young people are leading the way here as well. They're asking the right questions: "You've made the changes in the residential sector. Why haven't you made those same changes in the industrial and commercial sectors?" I think it's a very good question.

I think the member from Mississauga South has brought forward a good complementary bill to some of the environmental protection that has come forward in the past four or five years on pesticide reduction, toxin

reduction, the Lake Simcoe Protection Act, tire and electronics recycling, and a greenbelt that's now being protected. The type of initiative being put forward by the member is one that I think is a good first step.

At the end of the day, you have to look at a private member's bill—at least I always do—and say, “After I support this, should this pass, is Ontario going to be further ahead or further behind?” I think that by supporting this bill that's before us today—despite the criticism you may have of our government and previous governments—you'll be advancing the cause of this province. It deserves the support of all members of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It is my pleasure to speak to the bill brought forward by the member from Mississauga South. I have to say that I, like others who have spoken today, agree that there needs to be more done in terms of diversion of waste from landfill. When I was a city councillor in Hamilton many moons ago, I actually chaired the committee that brought in the diversion programs for Hamilton—I guess I should say, that expanded upon the one diversion program that we had for household waste at the time, which was the blue box. We went through a significant process, part of which was, in fact, visiting Halifax and looking at the things that they had already brought into place in that jurisdiction to divert recyclables and organics from landfills, because as we know, particularly the organics and other types of materials that were willy-nilly being dumped into landfill sites and dumps—the old term for that kind of facility—basically created a toxic soup that ended up getting into water tables and causing all kinds of problems.

1610

Nonetheless, the reality is that the bill, as it sits right now, doesn't really have in it the scale of initiatives that we would like to see for some real action. It talks about what companies need to do, but it doesn't talk about how they're going to get there. I think that's a little bit of a weakness. Certainly, in terms of the sentiment, it's a bill that people can support, but in terms of the actual nuts and bolts of how it actually happens, I think it's missing, and that's an important piece.

It took us a couple of years to develop a plan in Hamilton to divert our organics and to divert more recyclables out of the landfill system. We didn't reach our diversion target of 65% by 2008. We got somewhere up in the 40s, I believe, at this point. I'd like to pretend that it's because I'm not there anymore making that ship sail in the right direction, but I know that's not true. The people of Hamilton have worked really hard in their waste diversion efforts. We have a program where we're taking all the kitchen waste that people are prepared to put in their green bins. I cut the ribbon just recently, within the last two years, at the organics composting facility. We send those organics back to the community in the form of compost that they can use in their gardens, so there's a lot of value there. One of the things that came

up when I was cutting that ribbon a couple of years ago was the perspective that we need to start taking in the province of Ontario, that we need to start nipping at the source the amount of waste that we produce. We have to start looking at things like packaging and how we can get companies to start reducing the waste that they're putting into the waste stream in terms of the products that they're producing. It's called extended product responsibility, and it's something that we really need to get our heads around in the province of Ontario.

Extended product responsibility does two important things: It requires companies to pay for and facilitate the recycling of their own products, and it also—since they have to pay for and manage the recycling—of course, provides the incentive to reduce the waste that they produce in first place. Instead of requiring waste companies to somehow sort, analyze and report the composition of the waste they haul, the government should be requiring the companies to actually increase the proportion of their end product that is properly recycled and require that companies reduce the amount of waste that they actually produce.

There are many ways that this can be accomplished. One of them, which we are seeing in some small ways implemented here in Ontario, is the mandatory deposits at the liquor store for glass and getting those glass bottles back into the recycling stream. There can be a lot more done there. I think, when I was in Halifax, they had cans and they had tetra packs that were at that time—like the domed boxes of milk, for example, and juices—being deposit-recycled. It's an excellent system. There should be some kind of deposit system for cans, glass, and plastic bottles at point of sale, so that the retailers of these products receive back the recyclables in their stores, and have to then see to the fact that they don't go into landfill, but get recycled.

They should require large retailers to provide waste and recycling drop-off points for all of the classes of products that are in their stores, so that you can buy something somewhere, and it's going to be recyclable, and you take it back to the same place you bought it, to make it easy for the consumer and to make sure it stays out of the waste stream. Effectively, it turns shopping centres into both shopping centres and recycling centres. There's an idea that might work very well in the province of Ontario.

The government could require the larger restaurants, schools, offices, malls and other locations where large quantities of food are eaten to provide facilities for organic composting and recycling. Again, the ICI sector has been left out of the loop and pretty much ignored, yet we know that they're one of the most significant generators of waste in the province. The government could implement a provincial packaging protocol requiring companies to reduce excessive packaging of products.

I'll never forget—oh, I'm going to run out of time. I can't tell the story; it's a good one, though. Can I get unanimous consent to tell my story? I guess not.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 105. I think it's a very important bill and I want to commend the member from Mississauga South for bringing this issue to this House to be debated. Hopefully this bill will pass.

I was listening to the member from Oakville. I think we would be further ahead if we pass this bill because it would bring a lot of different, important initiatives.

I believe strongly, like many other people in this place, that we are the stewards of the land. I believe we inherited this land from our ancestors in good shape, and it is our responsibility, ethically, morally and legally, to hand it to future generations in good shape. So this bill, I think, goes in this direction and gives people the chance to keep the land clean, and also minimizes the products that go to landfill, especially industrial and institutional products.

I want to talk about a very important facility in my area, in my riding of London—Fanshawe. I know that since 2003 basically every Minister of the Environment and every Minister of Natural Resources went to visit this facility. I believe that Minister Cansfield went to Try Recycling and toured the facility, and many others went. Not a long time ago, the Minister of the Environment, the Honourable John Gerretsen, went and opened the new facility alongside the 401.

This place recycles almost 98% from industrial waste. All the material from industrial waste goes to this facility, is recycled and goes back to be reused in many different areas: construction, gardens, homes and many different areas. I think it's very important. Many people talk about glass bottles; they also use them. They mix recyclable glass bottles with salt to use in the wintertime, for, you know—

Interjection: Roading?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Yes, for roading. It's very, very important. Also shingles, drywall, and many different things—instead of going to landfills and damaging the environment, those products go back to the market to be reused. I think that's a very important initiative.

Those facilities, those initiatives, should be imitated across the province of Ontario. But those initiatives cannot be implemented unless we have strict rules, which the member from Mississauga South brings to this House. Bill 105 gives that chance, gives strength and ability to the Minister of Environment to implement it, and allows people across the province of Ontario to open facilities like Try Recycling and divert most of the waste that instead goes from landfills back to the market to be used again.

So I think the member from Mississauga South brings up a very different, important element. What he has brought to us in this House I don't see as very difficult to implement. I don't see it as very difficult to apply in reality because he brings a logical approach to the whole situation: imposing some kind of inspections; holding the people who hold the ICI waste, from point A to point B, responsible for reporting to the Ministry of the Environment on an annual basis; also allowing the Ministry of the Environment to inspect those facilities on a regular

basis to make sure nothing goes to landfills if we can recycle it; and imposing some kind of penalty for the people who do not comply with the rules and regulations.

Through this initiative, through this law, we can protect our environment; we can create a green environment; we can pass on the land we inherited from our ancestors in good shape for future generations. So I think our obligation in this place is to make sure all the elements of our life are being protected.

I want to commend again the member from Mississauga South for bringing up such an important bill, and I hope all the members of the House support this great bill in order to make Ontario safer, greener and more environmentally sound.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

1620

Mr. Jeff Leal: I certainly want to applaud my colleague, the member from Mississauga South, for bringing forward Bill 105 today.

Prior to my arriving here in the fall 2003, I had the great privilege of being a municipal councillor in the city of Peterborough for 18 years, and for 10 of those years I was on the county/city waste management steering committee. During those 10 years, we embarked on a search to find a landfill site. It cost the county and city of Peterborough \$6 million to find and prepare a landfill site on Bensfort Road. Those in the viewing audience today who know the area of Peterborough will know where that is located. One of the things that we found out is how valuable landfill site space is, after spending that incredible amount—

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Leal: The member from Durham is interjecting. When he's at his cottage, I think he goes to the Bensfort landfill site from time to time, depositing his waste there. But I won't be diverted by his heckling this afternoon.

What is so important is, we know that we have a very large sector in the province of Ontario—the institutional, commercial and industrial waste—that needs to be accurately accounted for. This is the thrust of the member's bill this afternoon.

As we move forward, we know that we certainly can't, on a willy-nilly basis, use up very precious landfill sites. In fact, I happen to be a person who supports energy from waste. I think over a period of time we have got to get out of the landfill business and move into energy-from-waste projects. I do salute the region of Durham which is moving forward, I think in a fairly aggressive manner, to site an energy-from-waste facility. We know that the technology has certainly changed dramatically over the last decade in order to put that in place.

Ideally, as we plan our management of waste in the future, the number one issue, of course, is to recycle, and secondly, as we have done in the county and city of Peterborough, to establish a centralized composting program to remove the organic waste. What you have left over is the residual waste. Right now, of course, we

landfill it, and there are other people who believe that moving to an energy-from-waste approach will be very helpful in order to facilitate waste management in the province of Ontario.

But, indeed, we've certainly witnessed over the last number of years that a lot of waste from the ICI sector, as was pointed out quite accurately by the member from Mississauga South, ends up in that valuable landfill space that when it was designed, when you went through the process to site a landfill, should have been reserved basically for residential waste. We find that it is taken up rather quickly because of the volume of waste from the ICI sector.

I think what the member has proposed today is something that is forward-looking, and I frankly think we've had a very good discussion on this issue this afternoon. The member deserves a lot of credit. He has obviously been out. He has been consulting with groups in the ICI sector. He looks like he has a tremendous amount of support from those players, and I salute the member. This is a positive thing that we can move forward on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Sousa, you have up to two minutes to reply.

Mr. Charles Sousa: I'd like very much to thank my colleagues the members from Carleton-Mississippi Mills, Toronto-Danforth, Oakville, Hamilton Centre, London-Fanshawe, and Peterborough.

I've enjoyed going through the exercise of putting the bill together, and I appreciate the comments made by all of you in regard to the bill. It's worthy of note that some of your concerns were shared even during my deliberations over making the bill.

In regard to the hazardous waste, as brought forward by the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills, I recognize some of those issues but I would like to stick to dealing with just the solid waste components of the ICI industry and that sector.

In regard to penalties that were proposed, I am only trying to encourage good behaviour. We're not trying to burden the industry. In fact, in the discussions I've had with industry members, they're the ones that brought forward the fact that it's a doable process. Initially, I was thinking about having a half-yearly reporting requirement. It was they who said, "Let's go quarterly." They already keep track. They already know what they're picking up. They're contracting with the generators of waste. They have pickups and they have the delivery.

The member from Hamilton Centre brought up a good point about being actionable. One of the reasons that we're not, in this bill, attracting a monitoring system at the start or the generation of waste is because it's very difficult to manage. What I wanted to do was try to find something that had only a few points of contact. Dealing with waste haulers and the disposal transfer stations and facilities—we're talking about 200 points of contact. It's much more manageable.

The member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills also made reference to the issue of inspection and the way we've given powers to the auditors, and all we've done is

taken that directly from the EPA. It already exists, and that's how that was done.

The bill is intended to be complementary and to enable us to facilitate reporting so that we can then put in actionable strategies and targets.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

We will deal first with ballot item number 43, in the name of Mr. McNeely.

HOME ENERGY RATING ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR L'ÉVALUATION DE L'ÉNERGIE DOMESTIQUE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. McNeely has moved second reading of Bill 101. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Declared carried.

Second reading agreed to.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'd like the bill sent to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Agreed? Agreed.

We'll now deal with ballot item number 44.

FUEL SAFETY

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mrs. Albanese has moved private members' notice of motion number 52. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Declared carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Finally, we will deal with ballot item number 45.

WASTE REPORTING ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LES RENSEIGNEMENTS À FOURNIR CONCERNANT LES DÉCHETS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Sousa has moved second reading of Bill 105. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

Mr. Charles Sousa: I'd like to refer the bill to the Standing Committee on General Government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Agreed? Agreed. So done.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES SERVICES À L'ENFANCE ET À LA FAMILLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 8, 2008, on the motion for second reading of Bill 103, An Act to

amend the Child and Family Services Act and to make amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 103, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille et apportant des modifications à d'autres lois.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Debate?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my pleasure to finish my leadoff speech on the changes that the Minister for Children and Youth Services brought forward in Bill 103.

I set out in my initial remarks a number of the issues that I thought were of concern, and I wanted to just reiterate a particular piece, and that is, when the minister brought forward her leadoff speech on the bill, one of the things that she talked about was that it was really just a housekeeping type of issue, that in fact the bill really wasn't much more than bringing in 16- and 17-year-olds under the Child and Family Services Act the way that 12- to 15-year-olds are currently dealt with in terms of those young people who have been in the criminal justice system or in the youth criminal justice system. But then she went on to say that even though it's just a housekeeping matter, there were going to be a number of new opportunities for young people and that in fact this bill was going to bring opportunities for young people to have a new chance to turn things around in their lives and that the bill itself was going to somehow provide a chance for young folks who had had a brush with the law to make better choices in their future lives.

1630

I only wanted to raise that again because when she made those comments in her initial remarks—when those kinds of things are done, it makes people cynical. On the one hand, you're saying that it's a housekeeping bill; on the other hand, you're saying that it's going to do all of these other wonderful things. So it's either a housekeeping bill or it's a bill that does all of these wonderful things, but you can't have it both ways. So I would say that there are pieces to the bill that are not problematic in terms of understanding why the government wants to do what's pretty much already being done—that's the housekeeping part, which is to bring our young people who are currently in facilities that are probably not the best in terms of programming—usually sectioned-off pieces of the regular jails—and bring those kids into a system where they can hopefully—that's what the promise is, anyway—get some better programming in terms of education and other things, but mostly bring them out of the setting that they're in, and bring them back and repatriate them, more or less, with the younger folks who are in not only youth-type facilities that are secure custody but also in the less stringent types of custody in the province.

I talked about a couple of concerns that we had with issues like mail and how mail was going to be intercepted, particularly mail from and to lawyers—from the solicitors of kids who are in custody, and the extent to which those pieces of mail are going to be examined in this new legislation, which is different from the previous regime—and not necessarily to the knowledge of the young person. There are some serious concerns there,

and we need to look at that because I don't believe that that is something that's really necessary. I think that there certainly does need to be the opportunity to intercept pieces of mail where there is some suggestion or some thought that that mail or that package might contain something that could harm the young person or the young person could use to harm someone else, but I would say that unnecessarily restricting young people's opportunity to communicate with their own solicitors is problematic. So the thing is that a lot of new provisions are being brought into this legislation that are focused on the older kids, but there's a concern that some of these provisions are going to be also then placed on the younger children who are in the system, and that raises some concern.

I also mentioned, the last time I was speaking, the concern around the lack of consultation that the government made in regards to their preparation of this bill and the lack of opportunity that not only young people themselves but the child advocate's office had to have consultation with the government about this bill. It's frustrating, because the new office of the independent advocate is exactly that: It's a new office; it's independent. It's really important that the government acknowledges and recognizes the role of the independent child advocate. Certainly, cutting the independent child advocate out of the process of a bill that not only deals largely with children and youth but also a bill that, in fact, amends the independent child advocate's own legislation is a bit problematic. You can't, on the one hand, say that you want to have an independent child advocate in this province and then try to clip that out of the kids' wings or reduce that out of the kids' ability to do their job by trying to cut them out of the process of development of legislation that affects not only their own mandates but affects also the very people whom they are charged with having responsibility for in terms of amplifying the voice of, and that is the young people in our province. So it's one thing that the government doesn't think that young people should have a voice; it's another thing to think that the very person the government put in place to make sure that young people have a voice isn't having a voice. That's problematic.

The last thing that I was talking about before we ended was a concern that I have around pretrial detention. What we're concerned about is, the act expands the criteria for secure detention as opposed to open custody to include ensuring attendance at court, the safety of the public and security in a place of detention. The concern we have is that the use of custody prior to conviction really serves only two ends: to prevent a dangerous person from harming others and to ensure court attendance. Pretrial detention should not have as a goal to inflict a lesson on youth or to in any other way punish youth. We're concerned that this is something, whether intended or not, that may be the result of the way this legislation is drafted.

Pretrial detention periods also continue to be unduly long, due to backlogs in the courts, which we all know are there, and include too little remedial programming for

young people. Particularly if they are in pretrial detention for significant periods of time awaiting their trial date, there is no programming at all taking place. We also know that that programming is very important to young people in terms of trying to move them out of the kinds of behaviour that got them into the criminal justice system in the first place. All of this really does emphasize the importance of not unduly or unnecessarily detaining people, but particularly young people.

We have other issues around secure isolation, but before I move on to that, it's very clear, when we talk about young people and incarceration, and about where young people end up in terms of their likelihood of breaking the law or getting in trouble that would put them into the criminal justice system—I was starting to talk about this last week—that one of the things we have to recognize and acknowledge with people generally in the criminal justice system, and particularly with young people, is an overrepresentation of certain folks in the criminal justice system, and we know who those are. If you look at the statistics, you know very well that there is an overrepresentation of racialized communities in the criminal justice system. We have to look back at the criminogenic needs of youth and at the fact that there are things young people need to have, in terms of their basic life necessities, to give them opportunity that does not lead to crime.

I don't think I'm speaking out of turn when I say that this government needs to seriously look at the poverty rates in this province, look at the lack of opportunity for young people in this province, and look at the lack of affordability of education in this province if they're ever going to get a handle on what they need to do to start giving young people a chance. If a young person's life is a life of constant moving because their parents—or usually parent—cannot sustain a decent job and cannot pay the rent, and they have to move back and forth or around from apartment to apartment with little stability, and they have to go school without any food in their belly, oftentimes having to deal with the peer pressure that exists in terms of the culture that unfortunately many young people are getting into these days, which is the easy money culture particularly around the sale of drugs, then we can't really expect much else than we have, which is kids who end up getting in trouble with the law because they don't have any options, any choices or any chance to get ahead or see a future in the system that frankly keeps them living in poverty and keeps them without resources and options.

I think it's a matter, really, of acknowledging that here are things we need to do in Ontario to provide and make sure that young people from the earliest ages are equipped with the tools they need to be able to make a go of a decent quality of life. When we look at those statistics and those numbers—I was actually just looking at a document I brought to my desk—there's some really good work being done right now in the Colour of Poverty campaign, and they've come up with a number of fact sheets that describe the racialization of poverty and

what that's doing to communities, neighbourhoods and families, and mostly to youth, particularly here in Toronto. It's interesting, because one of their fact sheets speaks specifically to youth in the criminal justice system, and specifically to the fact that young people are being left with very few options, and unfortunately one of the options they're being left with is drug trafficking.

1640

What's happening is, instead of going after the big, bad kind of drug-trafficker types, the people who are importing the drugs, the statistics are showing that more and more young kids from poor neighbourhoods are the ones ending up in incarceration. They're ending up incarcerated because they're in desperate straits and they end up being lured by the money, by the possibility of having a dollar in their pocket. You can't blame them when you look at their parents, who in most cases have been suffering for very, very long periods of time in low-income jobs or, in many cases, on social assistance because the jobs just aren't there for them. We shouldn't be surprised, then, when we say that there is a concern about young people in the criminal justice system, that we notice and we realize that these are often young people who come from very, very difficult circumstances.

Going back to what I said at the beginning of my remarks, everybody absolutely wants to make sure we're doing everything we can to keep communities safe and to keep hard-working folks, upstanding members of the community, safe from crime. We don't want to see people fearful, walking in their streets. We don't want to see people afraid of going out at night. We don't want to see people worried that they are going to take their car out for some evening event and get into a carjacking situation or anything like that. Nobody wants to see that. We know that oftentimes these things are not happening in the big gated-type communities, they're not happening in the highest-income neighbourhoods; they're happening in regular neighbourhoods, to regular folks. Everybody would agree that we need to make sure that's not something we tolerate.

This bill brings those young people who are in trouble with the law into one system, more or less, but what it doesn't do is address not only the roots of some of the crime that we see in the province of Ontario, it also doesn't provide the solutions that are going to get those kids who end up in the criminal justice system to another place when they are out of the criminal justice system once they've served their time, once they are no longer incarcerated, once they get out of the secured facility, once they get out of the more custodial facility. Once they are back on their own, what is there for them? This is the thing we have to start turning our minds to. If the only thing for them is more poverty, if the only thing for them is a roadblock when it comes to higher education because they can't afford it, if the only thing for them is a room, not even a home—maybe not even a room, but living on the streets—then we really can't expect the outcomes for those young people to change; not at all. In

fact, what we can expect is more of the same. If there are no employment opportunities, if there are no good jobs, if there are no places where they can earn a decent income, if there are no social systems with which they can connect and begin to grow their self-esteem and their sense of ability to have control over their lives, then we're not going to be getting very far.

Yes, the legislation is coming forward. There are things we would like to see changed, so I look for an opportunity to have a conversation at committee, particularly around being very clear about the role of not only the child advocate but the role of MPPs—I mentioned this in my remarks the other day—and the opportunity of MPPs, of child advocates, of ombudsmen to be able to enter facilities freely. Unfortunately, that is one of the things that got lost in the housekeeping transition from the former regime to the one that's before us in Bill 103. We need to make sure that there is always an opportunity for watchdogging of these facilities. I'm not saying that there are problems rife right now, but we know there have been horrendous problems in the past, and we know that often it has been elected members who have gone into facilities to in some ways blow the whistle on what has gone on in facilities. We need to make sure this bill is amended to ensure that the past ability of MPPs to enter premises is put back in. We cannot lose that opportunity. There are very few things that we can afford to lose, and one is the capacity of MPPs, advocates and ombudsmen to enter these types of facilities. We know what's happening there in terms of the incarceration of young people, certainly, but we also know that these facilities can sometimes be problematic. There sometimes can be issues within these facilities that are not easily uncovered any other way than in having a completely independent, completely unbiased look at them.

Speaker, although I only have a few minutes left, a few seconds left, I think it's important to reiterate that this does have to go to committee. We have a couple of recommendations for change. I would hope that the minister would accept those recommendations. I think we all believe that what's in the best interests of the child and the youth is important in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and/or comments?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I want to thank the member from Hamilton Centre for her input on the bill for youth justice.

There are just a couple of things that I wanted to sort of clarify. One that she spoke about last week and again today was the mail. Certainly, incoming and outgoing mail for youth of 16 and 17 is currently being opened, and incoming for those 12 to 15 is also being done. So the change here would be that outgoing mail would also be affected.

Mail isn't opened unless there is a concern or reason for doing so. It would be opened in front of the youth as well so that they are aware of what's happening. The reason for needing to do that sometimes is for the

protection of other youth in the facility. If they were to, in an outgoing letter, name another youth or maybe address a letter to a victim or such thing, if there were concerns within the facility that there's something in the mail that could either harm someone else or could violate the rights of another person, then there's cause to open that mail.

But certainly mail coming from an MPP, their lawyer, the child advocate or the Ombudsman is never opened. That would remain strictly going to the youth as they need to see it.

Also, in terms of the child advocate—the member talked about consultation with the child advocate—the minister has spoken directly with the child advocate. The officials have briefed the child advocate on the bill as recently as yesterday. Also, if you look at the bill, you'll see that what is in there is technical. It does affect—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further questions and comments?

Mr. Frank Klees: The disappointment that I want to express is that the bill before us is primarily an administrative bill. It does little, if anything at all, to address the real underlying issue, which is that we have many young people in this province today who are crying out for support, for help, and this government is failing them.

What I would have preferred to see is this government coming forward to say, "We are going to properly resource the agencies that are throughout this province now so that they can in fact do what they are mandated to do, and that is to come alongside of youth in our province, to move them from where they are in their despair and in their circumstances to a life that is productive."

What it's going to take is for this government to properly fund children and youth mental health and properly fund our justice system to ensure that if there is an offence committed, rather than languishing in a system for years where young people don't know if they're coming or going, if in fact they are innocent, that they are declared so and that they can get on with their life, or if they are guilty, that there is a consequence for their actions so that it can be dealt with and they can get on with living meaningful lives.

This government continues to come into this place with legislation that allows them to speak at length about what they want to do but is very short on actually resourcing the agencies which have the responsibility to address the real needs in our community.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I would just like to say that the member from Hamilton Centre has spoken very well about the need to address the much larger social-infrastructure questions if we want to indeed deal with youth crime and youth security.

It's quite correct that we have an administrative bill before us. There are some housekeeping things that have to be done, and the member addressed those. But the larger question of how we ensure that young people have

opportunities, how we ensure that poverty is addressed so that people are not desperate; the larger questions of ensuring that there are youth workers there to give people in difficult circumstances an opportunity to go in other directions: All those questions are being left unattended by this government.

There's no question, when you look at a society, that you need infrastructure for roads; you need infrastructure for electricity, for water and all of that. But you also need social infrastructure, and if you don't have that social infrastructure, you breed conflict, you breed desperation, you breed destructive behaviour.

When we deal with the kind of bills that we have here, one is always reminded that in fact the larger questions and the larger issues are left untouched. The member went through those. She talked about the difficulties with the bill itself, but went back to this question of how we are going to make sure that people can live decent lives so that the destructive behaviour that catches our attention, that worries so many of us, is actually substantially reduced. That's something that this government hasn't addressed—has to address, must address. It has a number of years left in its mandate. When will it be serious about dealing with poverty? When will it be serious about reinvesting in youth workers so that we have a fighting chance of keeping kids safe and set on a path that will give them a productive life?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Being from western Mississauga, I'm from an area that's fairly typical of people in the 905 belt. In a community like ours, people are really concerned about youth crime. Today, those of us who are in the generation of being parents and, like some of my peers, grandparents, we remember the days when we, as baby boomers, didn't live in a universe with a zillion TV channels. Back then, there were fewer people in our communities, but back then, a lot of the things that make lurid headlines today simply happened and nobody knew about them.

What are some of the things that this bill does? What it does is it addresses some of the concerns of parents who need two incomes to live and have children who are, in many cases, raised by their grandparents. There's an awful lot of opportunity in those families for something to go wrong or for something to fail to go right.

So that's what this bill does: It takes some of the youth who are inside the justice system and provides some workable methods to deal with those particular individuals. For example, what it does do is it doesn't let young offenders hide behind their status of simply being young. This bill allows the justice system to reach the young people who are crying out for help. What it does is it helps them get straightened out and live a life that is in fact productive.

What the bill does make a contribution of is that it doesn't let kids languish in the justice system, but it does enable the system to help them get on with their lives. For most people who live in the homes where I come

from, what they're looking at and saying is, "If this is my kid or if this is a kid on my street, can we straighten this one out? Can we help that person get on with their life, and ultimately have a safer community?"

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Hamilton Centre has up to two minutes to respond.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you to the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and the members from Newmarket-Aurora, from Toronto-Danforth and from Mississauga-Streetsville.

On the questions particularly from the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex: The change in this bill is that it used to be that mail could be intercepted coming in, mail to children. What the new bill does is, it intercepts mail going out as well. That's a change. So the issue is not just mail, it's e-mail; it's everything else. What we're concerned about is the extent to which these rules, which were put in place for the older children, end up migrating more or less to the younger children. It doesn't make sense that you're intercepting the letter that Suzy or Johnny is sending to their mom, Suzy and Johnny being 12 years old. That's a bit of a question, and so I think it's important to review that at the committee stage.

The other question around access—it wasn't a matter of access to mail from the Ombudsman or MPPs or solicitors, and in fact this bill does not say that the young person has to be present when their mail is opened and read. In fact, the youth can go on not even knowing that their mail is being intercepted and read. That's a problem, and one of the things we want to discuss at committee to understand why the government thinks that that's a better way to go. So just in terms of clarification, I think it's important. But it's not a matter of intercepting mail in or out from these various people—the Ombudsman, MPPs, the child advocate or officers from the child advocate's office—it's a matter of allowing for access to custody facilities by MPPs, the Ombudsman, the child advocate.

These are extremely important rights that we as MPPs should be able to maintain, to enter facilities, and we should be making sure that the Ombudsman is allowed to do that as well, and the same for the child advocate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I'm pleased to rise today to speak in support of Bill 103, the Child and Family Services Statute Law Amendment Act, 2008. This legislation was introduced on September 29 by my colleague the Minister of Children and Youth Services, and this bill will see two existing pieces of legislation, the Child and Family Services Act and the Ministry of Correctional Services Act, brought together to create a single legislative framework for youth justice services in this province.

At the present time, the two existing laws serve separate purposes to achieve a similar end. The Child and Family Services Act governs young people between the ages of 12 and 15 at the time of the offence, and the

Ministry of Correctional Services Act covers young people ages 16 and 17 when an offence is committed. By harmonizing these laws and creating this new framework, the government will complete its efforts to create a new justice system devoted exclusively to the needs of young children and young people. Certainly, as was talked about earlier, although this is a technical bill, it is part of the transformation of the whole youth justice system that we are embarking on.

This is important for a number of reasons. First, it will create a dedicated, fully integrated correctional system that is responsive to the needs of youth between the ages of 12 to 17 at the time of their offence who find themselves in conflict with the law. Secondly, it will take steps to ensure that, in cases where the safety and security of the community require it, the young people who pose a danger to themselves and to others will be dealt with appropriately and effectively. I would like to say a few words about each of these important elements.

I don't think it should come as any surprise to anyone that young people who find themselves in conflict with the law have very different needs from adult offenders. Equally important, there is also no doubt on this side of the House that these young people must be held responsible for the choices that they make and the actions that they take. By establishing a separate stand-alone justice correctional system for young people aged 12 to 17 at the time of the offence, we can provide programs and services to help youth become productive and effective members of society again.

I was heartened last week to hear the member from Hamilton Centre say that she supported having a stand-alone system for youth. This is what she said: It was "the right thing to do" and that it would "give opportunities for better rehabilitation so that the kids who have found themselves in the youth justice system will be able to have the most supports that they could possibly have and be able to, hopefully, some day, live very productive lives, and healthy lives at that." We don't always agree from one side of the House to the other, but I think on this we certainly understand the core principle and we agree on that.

1700

A major component of the new youth justice correctional system is the commitment to stop housing youth in the same quarters as adults and having something that is important and separate for them and built for them.

I would also like to take the opportunity to remind the House that while in government, the official opposition also supported the principle of separate youth justice facilities apart from adult facilities. As far back as 1997, the member from Leeds-Grenville, while Solicitor General, came out in support of integration, saying, "The establishment of dedicated youth facilities separate and apart from adult institutions is long overdue and will ensure that appropriate youth services continue to be available on a consistent basis, independent of ongoing restructuring of Ontario's adult correctional institution system."

I couldn't agree more. A dedicated youth justice system, including separate youth justice facilities, is long overdue. That is why, as a government, we have committed by April 1 of next year to remove all young people in custody from the secure adult correctional facilities that they are currently occupying. As my colleague the Minister of Children and Youth Services has already stated, we are on schedule to keep this commitment.

In addition to the 20 secure youth centres across the province, our government is currently building or expanding youth justice centres in a number of communities across the province. The first of these centres opened last July in Sault Ste. Marie and has been welcomed by community leaders, justice partners, social workers and those involved in dealing with youth who are in conflict with the law. Additional youth centres are being constructed in Brampton, North Bay and Fort Frances, while the existing centre in Ottawa is being expanded to provide more space. All are set to open before April 1, 2009.

At each of those facilities, young people who have run into problems with the law are provided with the opportunity to take advantage of on-site education and rehabilitation programs. By learning new skills and understanding the consequences of their actions, the residents of these facilities will take their first steps toward earning the right to re-enter society.

These facilities represent just one aspect of our government's commitment to providing support and guidance to young people to ensure that they make the right choices, both now and in the future.

At the same time, we do not believe that providing secure custody is the only solution to deal with the problems associated with youth who come into conflict with the legal system. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services provides a full range of sanctions and supports for youth in conflict with the law. These are designed to respond to the individual, based on the individual, the severity of the crime and other considerations. It would be both ineffective and inappropriate to respond to all youth in conflict with the law in the same way.

This is why the Ministry of Children and Youth Services is continuing to implement its alternatives to custody and community intervention strategy. Again, as I said, this is part of the transformation of the youth justice system. This strategy is designed to complement existing federal programs to provide alternatives to incarceration for young people aged 12 to 17 at the time of the offence. Right now, the strategy has 184 programs currently active across Ontario. For instance, the government has established 32 government intervention centres across the province to provide programs and supports to young people in a non-residential setting. As an alternative to custody, these centres offer timely and effective programs such as training in anger management, life skills, and counselling on how to get and keep a job. They are operated by local agencies with experience in dealing with youth in conflict with the law and are funded through a partnership with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services.

We've made investments in community-focused extra-judicial measures. According to the federal Department of Justice's website, "Community-based policing and community-oriented responses are often the most meaningful for families and victims." That federal government website counters the myths surrounding youth justice with the realities of youth justice. I would encourage members to go to that site and read some of the information that's available there.

As a government, we have also recognized that culturally appropriate programs are needed for First Nations youth. That's why the government has also implemented 17 alternative-to-custody programs for aboriginal young people in communities across the province. The programs provide aboriginal youth in conflict with the law with support and special programs in an environment that responds to their special needs and is relevant to their culture and their civilization.

In May 2006, our government established the African-Canadian youth criminal justice program to provide support and services for youth in conflict with the law at four locations in the greater Toronto area. We've also asked former Justice Roy McMurtry and former Speaker Alvin Curling to co-chair the Review of the Roots of Youth Violence. Their report will be complete in the coming weeks, and follows extensive meetings and consultations throughout this province.

Youth crime is a complex issue and there are no simple solutions, but I know that all members of this House are passionate about addressing the roots of this problem. Our goals with all of these programs are simple: Make young people take responsibility for their actions while providing them with the tools they need to get back on the right track to contribute to society. Helping young people make better choices will lessen the likelihood that they will reoffend. In our conversations with front-line workers in law enforcement and youth justice, these measures are already producing positive results.

This leads to a discussion of the second pillar of our efforts to establish a separate stand-alone youth justice system in Ontario; that is, the need to deal with those youth who, for a variety of reasons, persist in making the wrong choices and remain involved in criminal activities. While I mentioned a few moments ago that secure custody is not the only option for dealing with youth in conflict with the law, we can and must be prepared to use it for those who cause harm to our society.

Critics of this proposed legislation may be tempted to say that it does not go far enough to protect the lives and property of the people of Ontario, particularly in the case of criminal activity involving older youth. However, our proposed legislation provides decision-makers with greater discretion in determining the level of detention for youth in custody who face new charges, and, where necessary, we can ensure that young people who are detained while facing new charges and who represent a serious risk to public safety can be held in secure youth facilities to prevent them from reoffending.

This is consistent with the federal proposal to broaden the possibility of detention for young people and for

people who present a danger to the public. It also provides additional mechanisms to ensure that youth who are in secure custody cannot harm themselves or others. To do this, we will give service providers additional powers to deal with contraband items and protect all staff and clients at youth justice facilities.

1710

Ontarians have the right to expect that those who pose a danger to our citizens will be dealt with to the fullest extent of the law and will be kept in secure custody while they serve their sentences. We are committed to ensuring that this right is maintained and, in many cases, strengthened.

This proposed legislation will take the action that is needed to create a dedicated, stand-alone youth correctional system, a system that is compassionate to those who merit compassion and tough on those who continue to take part in criminal activity.

For these reasons, and others that will be outlined by my colleagues, I would urge all members of the House to join me in supporting these proposed amendments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to get up just to put the House on notice that I will be speaking on behalf of the opposition here in a few minutes.

I'm just paying attention as I'm going through the bill. It's a very heavy administrative type of bill, and some of it's a carryover from earlier legislation, and in that respect, most people have said it's administrative in nature. It doesn't deal very substantively with any of the root cause issues in the youth criminal justice system.

In my remarks I'll probably talk in a general way about where we find ourselves today, but it is strange that on this day when we'd be in second reading on this bill, today is the beginning of the trial on the murder of Jane Creba. Three years ago, on Boxing Day, this young person was killed in a gangland-style murder at the Eaton Centre on Yonge Street by a stray bullet or something. The young person who has been accused or charged—certainly whether or not he's guilty is what the trial is about—falls under the Young Offenders Act. As such, he can't be named, which is a tragedy because the family, with the devastation around that—they have been tormented. Imagine the last three years of anxiety, waiting for justice to be served, and at the end of the day, you wonder if it will be served. So it's an anomaly or an odd event that we'd be having this discussion about the administration of the youth criminal justice system.

I will get into the administrative part of it certainly and try to dwell on some of the content portions of the bill that have been controversial. A couple of very small parts have actually been in the media. That's why I stayed today, to make sure that we put some of the this information on the record. I appreciate the member from the government side from—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further questions and comments?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my pleasure to make a few remarks on the speech by the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

One of the things that the member mentioned earlier on was the assertion that the minister actually met with and spoke to the child advocate. I know for a fact that that was an afterthought. In fact, I was in touch with the advocate quite some time earlier, knowing that the bill was coming forward, and found out to my dismay at the time that the advocate's office had not been consulted, and as an afterthought, after it being raised in this place, the call was made to the advocate by the minister. So that's just poor form in terms of trying to make sure that you're consulting with the people who are going to be affected by legislation that you're bringing forward. It's problematic.

In fact, when the advocate finally did get a briefing from the ministry, one of the things that they were shocked to find as they went through the whole briefing and forgot to mention was the fact that there are amendments in this bill to the advocate act itself. Again, that's not really good in terms of transparency and openness when it comes to having a conversation about legislation you're bringing forward, particularly with those stakeholders who are affected. I just wanted to indicate—and the same thing happened to me when I got my briefing—that there was no copy of the bill provided to me and no copy of the bill provided to the advocate, so it's kind of hard, then, to have a conversation about a piece of legislation when you're not given a copy of it so you can look to it for details. Obviously, the details were not something the government wanted anybody to have knowledge of prior to this second reading debate.

Having said that, the bill does have its merits, but it also has its problems. We certainly look forward to not only identifying those problems but seeing that the government fixes them or addresses them in committee. That would be very, very helpful.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: Just to comment on this Bill 103, the thing we sometimes forget about in our day-to-day lives as legislators is that there is a whole system out there dealing with criminal justice and dealing with youth criminal justice. That's a very difficult task for our correctional officers and for our courts. Sometimes, in our own lives, we never come into contact with this reality, but it's a reality that exists in Ontario and every other jurisdiction, and we've got to take our hats off to men and women who work in this area and ensure that these offenders are dealt with.

It came to my knowledge in a very stark way when I was in city hall court in Toronto. I had gone there because there was a bail hearing as a result of a shooting and a killing in my riding of Eglinton-Lawrence. I was there with the family to make sure that the accused in this case didn't get out on bail, because they were worried about bail being granted. But that morning in Toronto city hall court, right in very chic, downtown Toronto with

all these fancy buildings, you wouldn't believe the number of young 14-year-olds, 15-year-olds, one after another, parading before the judge with all kinds of criminal activity that occurred over the weekend—this was Saturday morning. While we're going about our so-called normal business, the judges and our police officers, our criminal justice system, have to deal with this reality. That's why this type of legislation and other pieces of legislation dealing with ensuring we've got a good system here in Ontario are very important and bring to light the importance of our paying more attention to this. This bill at least helps us to do that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments? Seeing none, the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex has up to two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I want to thank the member from Durham, the member from Hamilton Centre and the member from Eglinton-Lawrence for their comments. Certainly, to what the member from Durham talked about, I think all of us are reminded again of what happened to the Creba family on Boxing Day, and our thoughts and prayers go out to them.

As I said in my comments, we recognize that there are many options to deal with youth who are in trouble with the law, and one of them necessitates their being put into secure custody, in many cases, because they are a danger to society. They need to be there so that they can be prevented from reoffending. This legislation is intended to make sure that we are part of a process of transformation in the youth justice system. We want to make sure that the punishments are appropriate for these young people. We want to make every endeavour to rehabilitate these children and these young people so that they don't reoffend, so that they do become good members of society. This is above all very important for us, because even as parents we all know that people should be given another opportunity, and need to be given the opportunities that will allow them to become contributing members of society.

1720

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: It is a pleasure here on this late Thursday afternoon to reflect for a few moments on a government bill introduced in September—the 29th, actually—by the Minister of Children and Youth Services, the Honourable Deb Matthews.

As all members have said many of the same things, I think it's mostly important to point out where we are in the legislative day. This may not seem relevant, but I think it is relevant, because this is an important thing that affects our communities in many ways—youth in conflict with the law.

We're doing it on a Thursday afternoon, which is normally, if you look at the new standing orders—and I'm still having a problem, Mr. Speaker, with the standing orders themselves. They've changed the standing orders so that Thursday afternoons, the last couple of

weeks, have been relegated to four private members' bills, and each party participates in that. The days often wrap up early. But they've called another order to complete the legislative day, this Bill 103.

I should say that there are around 20 people here, and there are not too many people paying attention.

We've all talked about it, and the bill, as it legislatively is outlined here, is administrative in nature. I guess the—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, there are five ministers here, which is reinforced and good—I believe there are five ministers here, and there's a total of 21 people in the Legislature—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Seventeen, I think, 17 or 18 of the—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Now, it is a government bill, and so I—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Speaker. Please, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. I'll just remind the honourable members we don't talk about who's here and who isn't here and how many.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Calm down. We only have a few minutes left and then we're done.

The honourable member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you. Well, certainly I—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: You should never kick a beehive. You'd better not kick a beehive.

But in focusing on the bill—why I'm glad that people are now paying attention, because I'm speaking, is this; the reason I'm saying it is this. The member who spoke earlier, the member from Newmarket–Aurora, Mr. Klees, was, I think, an excellent minister in his time in government, and in opposition has served with a distinguished record, is interested in young people, and is the critic for education and transportation. The street-racing act and bills like that indicate that he's genuinely interested. He introduced a petition on young people who were killed tragically in an impaired driving situation up north. So he has a genuine interest. He spoke this afternoon on Bill 103, and I took note of a few things he said.

I see the Minister of Education is here, which is good, because what's missing here are the resources. We could play politics and blame whatever, but that's really the essential part of the bill that's missing.

Looking at most of the young people who are in conflict with the law, who have an issue of some sort, it doesn't necessarily break down on wealth or poverty or any of those things to any great extent. What it does break down to is youth bullying, which is a big topic in our schools. Bullying forces people to act out in different ways. Some act out maliciously, and others become part of a gang so that they can be protected by their peers and

friends. This kind of behaviour often manifests in swarming of young people. This is where I believe resources should be put. I would support the minister's action in dealing with that. Not just the physical bullying, the cyber-bullying, if you will, provokes a lot of this sort of violent culture in certain segments of youth in society.

There's not enough attention being paid in this bill, as an administrative bill, to the root-cause issues. Mr. Klees spoke on that earlier today, and I give him credit for raising the content of the debate to something more than just reading some changes to two pieces of legislation.

Now, I should say that the bill we're dealing with, Bill 103, to be clear with the viewing public, or the listening public—it's too bad this isn't on the radio, because it would be a lot more entertaining, I think. This bill brings together two bills, and this has been mentioned by most. One is setting up a legal framework dealing with the Youth Criminal Justice Act. This is one of problems that I see, Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence. It's probably best to read it right out of the bill, because it's pretty well explained here. It says: "The bill amends the Child and Family Services Act and the Ministry of Correctional Services Act"—they're the two acts—"to reflect the fact that the Ministry of Children and Youth Services assumed responsibility for youth justice services." This really took place in 2004, so the bill we're dealing with is actually the implementation of some regulatory definitions and framework around that system. They promised to do it in the election, so we should keep the context in mind. They dillied and dallied for three years to put the administritivia, or bureaucracy, in place, and that's where we find ourselves today. There's no money allocated, that I've seen, and we're moving into the next budget cycle; we'll see.

But here's the subordinate part that the people really interested in this issue, if there's anybody here—the youth part, the 12 to 15. That's an age group that is just entering high school, that kind of age group, and it's merging them with the other groups that were covered under the Ministry of Correctional Services, those 16 to 17. I think the 12-year-old is different from the 17-year-old, and the peer influence, if they're institutionalized—a lot of this bill is about custodial care, by the way. I don't think they should be put together, because they'll be forming little relationships that may not be productive for the young ones. Do you understand? I don't think they're good. I think they could become entrapped in a system of conflict with the law, playing games with the judges, because the judges under the Young Offenders Act are powerless.

Here's the case we're talking about, the Creba case. The person probably won't do any time. They'll get time off for time served waiting for the trial. Even if they're found guilty, I think the most they can serve is five years for murder, taking someone's life. I wouldn't want a child who for some reason—it could have been a substance abuse issue, it could have been drugs, it could have been alcohol, it could have been just peer pressure, doing some silly thing, and pretty soon they're in conflict

with the law, then they're in conflict with their family, then they're in custodial care. There's a provision for this in the act. If you look at what we're reading today, there is a provision here that says that, if a person has been charged and they're already—here's an example: "Where secure detention is available"—and this comes under subsection 93(2)—very important. Often members don't get right into the nuts and bolts of the bill, and that's unfortunate. I like that kind of stuff; it's a little boring, but—this says here, "the young person has, within the 12 months immediately preceding the offence on which the current charge is based, been convicted of an offence for which an adult would be liable ... for five years or more." So they could have committed some serious vandalism, then been charged, waiting for trial, in conflict, and then let out because they were in open custody, and commit another offence. When they're in secure custody, they finally realize that the young person is a serious repeat offender.

Here's the deal: There's a difference between breaking a window and breaking someone's heart, or life, or something worse. So there's no translation here, but it does give the minister some powers. I think I'd be wanting to know who the minister was. Often it's not the minister, really. They sign it, but it would be the deputy minister and other appointed persons within the ministry, certainly not the minister. Very few of them would be qualified to make any of those assessments. Some of the members here would be. There are several doctors here who aren't fully utilized by the government, but they would probably be more qualified to do these assessments.

I would say, if you look under section 98.1(1) and other sections: "The minister may designate any person to conduct such inspections or investigations"—I hope they're not political appointments. I hope they're qualified people. This is a regulatory framework, and we should keep an eye on the fact that we're dealing with young people. They're not all the same. Some, if they were identified early and got the proper help and resources and remediation, could transform themselves into productive members of society. That's what's unfortunately missing in the bill. If you pay attention, we're dealing with restructuring, administrivia, setting up more offices, business cards, company cards and all these cellphones and stuff. But there's nothing to do with helping children in here—nothing, zero, not five cents. That is something I would urge the minister to address, and I leave that certainly on the Hansard record here. I'm not being critical; I'm just looking at the bill as it presents itself, as a layperson reading it.

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I think it's important to look at the powers of the minister too. We would have been accused when we were in government—any time they say, "The minister may make regulations with respect to the following things...." Almost every bill allows the minister, through orders in council, which are a publicly disclosed process, to make appointments and to make regulations. There's quite a bit

of that in this bill. These changes are, as I say, probably administratively a smart thing to do, probably more efficient. There is a cohort group there. They're not adult offenders; we're not dealing with the adult courts generally, and we just hope they don't end up in adult courts. That's my hope.

Serving time without resources being allocated to correct the addiction problem, the relationship problems, whether it's with their family, extended family or—hopefully, there is family around them, and many of the children are found on the streets today. In fact, Mr. Colle, the member from Eglinton—Lawrence, said in his remarks that he had attended a probation hearing and saw a string of people being paraded through a court.

Mr. Mike Colle: A bail hearing.

Mr. John O'Toole: In a bail hearing, yes. That bail hearing would be typical of any court after a bunch of young people had been rounded up on the weekend, for everything from traffic violations possibly or impaired this and that kind of activity. The courts are overwhelmed by this, and I don't think there's much attention being paid to, especially, these young, vulnerable children. I think of 15-year-olds, maybe even younger, who haven't got the supports that many of us in our families would have had, who have found themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time, and the police arrest them and they maybe act out a bit, loitering—do you know what I mean? It just happens spontaneously. Let's get in early, apply resources and try to fix the problem and save someone's life, save their value as a human being. I think Mr. Klees brought that up, and it meant so much to me that somebody was paying attention to the bill. I'm sure that many members here are.

The other brand of characters—not going on to the negative here, but when you see gang culture and a lot of manifestations of that—I won't go into it. I have five children and I've had to deal with those. They're not teenagers anymore; they're all 25 and 30 and stuff like that, so they're older. In fact, one of them is a lawyer, and hopefully he doesn't have to go to court too often. I guess my point is that gang culture, if you get into this pressure to get branded or earn your stripes, if you will, can be a life-changing event for these young people. You get into the repeat violent offenders. This is where I think salvation—they may have had a previous conflict with the law.

We're talking with the pages on their last day here today, and you're exemplary young people. You can help other young people, whether it's the peer pressure or the bullying or whatever goes on in your schools today. You can tell them the bright, positive things you can do. It is up to you. You are their closest advisers. They trust you more than they would trust, perhaps—I see the Minister of Education is now calling on youth advisers; I read that in the paper this morning. The youth council is a good idea to get their perspective on their lives, their interests and their priorities. You can have a contribution directly to, in this case, the minister, but in your school with your peer groups and involving the leadership group in the

school. That's a good thing; do you know what I'm saying? But when you have someone who's ruining your experience at elementary school or in high school, somebody has to stand up. You can point to the principal or the vice-principal, but the students have to be there as well, and their parents. It is very, very important that you never feel that you're alone. At the same time, imagine a young person who has been kicked out of home, is in need of help or support and is in conflict, and may need a friend like you, somebody who has made the right choices. So, we can all feel some responsibility.

Certainly, with this change administratively—it sets up secure custody, and there are all these definitions in here. It can be open custody as well. Now, if you have a repeat violent offender, you certainly wouldn't want them in open custody. It may look, in the paper, like a 17-year-old is being detained in a locked cell—it could be in isolation if they're acting out, hallucinating or whatever they're doing. But I would say that a 13-year-old who may have done something they shouldn't have is a whole different ball game; they're not in the same league. So age isn't the final determinant here, and it's up to the judge and the justice system to do some investigation, which is mentioned in the bill, and also make some determination of the appropriate care they need, plus detention, the shelter they need. Sometimes it's just a home, and that's also provided in the bill.

We could go on; as I said, there are a couple of other sections here. The reason I made it a point to speak today was that a couple of years ago, we presented a report—actually, it was called *Time for Action*. Mr. Tory led those hearings. We met with groups. I believe this was in the time of the year of the gun in Toronto. This report has never really been dealt with. I believe the Premier, the Attorney General and the appropriate ministers probably have a copy of it, and I would encourage you to look at *Time for Action*. That's the consultation model Mr. Tory would be promoting here. I would say it's a place to start.

By the way, that report does talk about resources. We would certainly like to work with the government in that way of making the system better for this particular group of people in conflict with the law. We have laws and we have laws, but when there are no resources to make those laws function for the desired outcome with young people and they have a future—unless we fix it early, they're always going to be a burden on society in some way, not just on themselves but on society, their family and the community in the broader sense, not the danger and disruption they bring to other people's lives, in many cases, like the Creba case we're talking about.

As I said, I would like to think I could speak all that time on such an intense topic, but it is Thursday and there are 20 minutes to go. I will probably give up the floor in a minute, but there are questions on this bill and it's only the second reading, so there's time to hear from the minister.

I'll relinquish the floor, because I've said enough. I think people have listened, especially to the part about attendance; there was a lot of attention to that. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I thought the member from Durham was going to ask for unanimous consent for us to expand the time for him to speak on this bill; he did such a great job.

I do have to thank him, because it's true: It gets a little bit yawny in this chamber at this time of the afternoon. After we've had a number of private members' bills, which we all debated vigorously, going through a bit of a technical bill is sometimes difficult. One of the things I have to congratulate the member for is waking us all up and getting us perked up, because he started mentioning who was here and who wasn't, in terms of attendance in chamber. He did a good job of getting our blood moving again and getting us a little bit more engaged, if you will.

I did want to mention a couple of pieces around what this member and, as well, one of the previous members from his caucus, said, particularly around some of the challenges that youth in Ontario have, and it comes out of a lack of opportunity to deal with problems early in their lives. Whether it's the identification of issues or syndromes like fetal alcohol syndrome or whether it's mental health problems that don't get addressed and treated earlier in life, as children grow, these problems become more severe and more difficult to deal with

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Unfortunately, we haven't found a way to nip these problems in the bud and provide the necessary treatments and programs to help kids who are facing mental health problems particularly, as well as other issues like fetal alcohol syndrome. Even though there have been private members' bills in this House around educating pregnant women in terms of alcohol consumption, there is a lot of work that needs to be done to educate educators, physicians, other health professionals and other people dealing with young people about identifying fetal alcohol syndrome and helping young people to negotiate through that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to comment on a couple of things that the member for Durham raised. I know that the member for Guelph, who is my parliamentary assistant, is going to be speaking to this legislation. She has done an enormous amount of work in terms of dealing with some of the root causes and changes to the Safe Schools Act that we have made in our term.

I just wanted to say, first of all, to the member that I accept his congratulations on the beginning of our student advisory council. I think it's going to be a very good thing for students in the province to have an opportunity to feed into education policy. I want to comment on his remarks about this legislation not addressing the root causes of problems that kids have to deal with, and with violence. That's not the purpose of this legislation. In fact, many of the things that we have done in education—and I'll just talk about education at this point—have been to specifically help kids who are struggling

with issues to deal with them. So, for example, we have a student success teacher in every high school in the province. What we know from the research is that having caring adults in a school to help kids who are struggling, to catch them before they get into trouble, to keep them in school, to keep them in a program that's interesting to them, is a major step in terms of their achievement.

Those programs we've put in place—specialist high-skills majors; resources for anti-bullying programs for schools; more psychologists, more social workers: There's \$43 million more in the system for those kinds of resources, including funding for priority high schools.

So in fact, in other parts of our government, we have put those resources in place. This piece of legislation is a part of that, but it is not the whole story.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I listened carefully to my colleague from Durham's remarks on Bill 103, the Child and Family Services Statute Law Amendment Act, 2008, which is quite a mouthful on its own and is being debated here this afternoon.

It is a bit of an administrative venture. The policy exists. A little bit of background, I believe, is that in 2003, after the Young Offenders Act was replaced by—I'll use the acronym—the YCJA, the Ontario government committed to creating this single system for youth aged 12 to 17 at the time of the offence. So the responsibilities have gone from what was the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services to the Ministry of Children and Youth Services.

It has been brought up many times that there certainly are some gaps in how we treat some of the young people who get into the system and become young offenders, and how we help them get out of the spot that they're in that may be difficult. For various reasons, they've got into the situation—family problems, mental health issues that weren't addressed, weren't identified early enough.

I know that the high schools in my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock have had some good success with some of their programs. It takes a lot of dedication on the part of the teachers in identifying and successfully placing them in programs that are appropriate.

I'm happy to say that I actually ran into three of the principals from my riding last night when I was out for a walk here in Toronto. They were at the Ministry of Education's launch of the student—anyway, it's students' feedback into the Ministry of Education. They were there.

That's part of the step. Hopefully, the ministry will listen to further needs that are in the community, especially for our youth, so we can give them the tools to succeed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It was interesting to hear part but not all of the commentary from the member from Durham.

This act, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act and to make amendments to other Acts, provokes an interesting debate. People may be familiar with *Bleak House*, the novel by Charles Dickens. *Bleak House* opens in a courtroom, with lawyers arguing over an inheritance, and the novel is about the loss of an inheritance, the frittering away of a family's wealth, through legal manoeuvres. When we have this debate in this House about this legislation, I think about the larger question, the question of youth, the question of people, who are put in situations where they are reshaped in a way that makes them destructive in their behaviour, a threat to community, and I think about the lack of action to actually deal with those issues. The member for Durham was correct: So often, those issues aren't addressed. What we have before us is essentially those technical manoeuvres from Dickens's novel, *Bleak House*. We're talking at length in a very dry way about the administrative matters that have to be dealt with in this law, instead of actually going out and protecting that inheritance, that next generation of youth who have to be nurtured, supported and, where they have been in some way damaged, prevented from damaging others. That's where those of us who have difficulty with this bill come upon the fundamental problem. This government may put forward legislation that makes sense within that context, but it doesn't make sense within society as a whole.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member from Durham has up to two minutes to reply.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to thank the member from Toronto-Danforth, the member from Hamilton Centre, the Minister of Education, and the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock for their comments and for listening attentively.

If I look back at the Hansard when the minister introduced this on, I think, September 29, she did say—though I guess I poked the Minister of Education to react—it was an administrative bill, and that's basically what it is. My point, really, was that we can spend as little time as possible on the administrative part and talk about what she did mention in her transformation agenda, because what she was saying is that if they can reduce the number of people in the youth criminal justice system, that's a laudable goal. What I was commenting on were suggestions, which means resources, to prevent re-offending. So those are the comments that she had made on the introduction to the bill.

I think we're all of one spirit here, trying to make sure that there are fewer young offenders and there are resources for those who do have conflict with the law, and part of that is that youth spend a great deal of time, if not in their homes, in their schools or other supervised places.

I think it's important for the minister to be engaged, and I think it is a real opportunity for young people, including those in elementary and secondary school, not just to be given token service. We extended the franchise of young people to be mandated to be represented on

school boards. That was our government, in the restructuring under the Education Act, that gave students a role on the board of school trustees.

What the minister is doing here that I think is good, and I've said that, is taking students seriously when it comes to their curriculum and what their priorities are in life. If we achieve that, I think we will be addressing the idea of early intervention in young people's lives, genuinely listening to their voice and suggestions, because so far it isn't working as well as it could, and they can't get anybody involved if they haven't been listened to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I welcome the opportunity to address this bill today, one that will create a unified youth justice system that includes 16- and 17-year-olds. Right now, those 16- and 17-year-olds are in limbo. They're not accessing the programming and support they need. It is right, it does make sense, to bring youth into a youth-only system better oriented toward rehabilitation so that they have more support to live healthy and productive lives.

We know that youth who get involved with the justice system, the corrections system, have often come from very difficult situations, growing up in poverty or in sexually or physically abusive situations, or struggling with mental illness. These are not strangers to us; they are youth from our communities. They are sometimes our neighbours, and we have a responsibility toward them, not only a responsibility in terms of having an administrative framework that deals with them fairly and that gives them the proper support, but we also need to deal with them fairly in terms of the social infrastructure that needs to be there so that everyone has an opportunity, from the earliest days of their lives, to live decently.

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We also have a responsibility to public safety, to ensure that people are able to live in their communities without fear. We know that many victims of violence, of crime, are people who come from working-class communities, poor communities. These are people who don't have the resources to protect themselves in gated communities or with surveillance systems. We have everything on our shoulders to make sure that all people are given an opportunity to live a decent life so that they won't engage in destructive behaviour. We need to look at what other jurisdictions have done. We need to understand what they've done effectively and what we can take into our hands here. There's no question that when we approach this issue in the House, all of us here today, from every side, want to reduce youth crime, particularly violent crime, and its serious impact on community members.

The questions that you ask yourself when you look at this legislation, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act, are: Will it improve public safety? Will it enhance the rehabilitation and successful reintegration of youth into our communities? If you look at the bill, there

are some positives, but there are also serious concerns. The aim of this act is to bring youth, ages 12 to 17, under one justice system, and that is a laudable goal. It makes sense that that age group is dealt with as one large group, that you don't have 16- and 17-year-olds off in a much less secure, much less structured system.

The limbo that 16- and 17-year-olds have been in for a long time is a longstanding issue. Those youth have been falling through the cracks. They have not been getting the programming they need when they've been put into wings of adult facilities. So it expands youth involvement in decisions about work and training. It makes sense particularly when 16- and 17-year-olds are involved.

But as I said, there are concerns about this bill. There's been a worrying lack of consultation in the development of the bill in the first place. Youth were not consulted. I have to say simply that if you want to be effective in bringing forward legislation that deals with young people, you should bring them into the process; you should be talking to them. In my riding, Toronto-Danforth, in the summer of 2006, we had two shootings, in the northern part of the riding. What was interesting to me was that the local faith community, the local church leadership, convened public meetings, pulled together something of a community group and started going out and meeting with youth, talking about what was needed in that community to prevent violence—what was needed in terms of resources, what was needed in terms of support.

One evening they had a youth worker come in, along with a young man who had grown up in a very difficult neighbourhood who talked about his experiences. For me, it was fascinating to actually hear a description of how young people were recruited into essentially the drug-dealing retail business. Kids who were five, six, seven or eight would be approached by someone who was—what can I say?—a wholesaler in the drug business and offered an opportunity to go to the store, pick up some small item—who knows?—a chocolate bar, peanuts—and told to keep the change. In that neighbourhood, where a dollar or two on Friday from their parents was an extraordinary amount of money, to be given \$5 and told to keep the \$3 in change afterwards was quite powerful in building a connection. That would go on for some time, and you would get a group of kids around that drug wholesaler who would build those connections. Then, as they would get older, they would do things like buying them running shoes. "Go get yourself some running shoes. I see the ones you've got on are rotten." They would do that. They'd be given 100 bucks and they'd buy the shoes. Then, as they got into their early teens, they'd be told, "We really like you. You've been really good. Could you just hold on to this bag for a few hours while I go out and see some folks?" And slowly, kids would be recruited into that network.

There was an interesting study that was done a few years ago in Chicago by an economist, looking at why drug dealers lived at home with their parents. When they actually talked to people who were drug dealers on the

south side of Chicago, who stood around on street corners trying to sell whatever the market was interested in buying, they found that on the whole these were people who were making about minimum wage or a little less. If you are a drug-dealing retailer, there is not an awful lot of money and there's a lot of hazard. It's fairly common for people either to be killed or jailed, all for minimum wage. But the reality was that the opportunities for other jobs weren't there; they didn't exist. So people who have no other options, who are brought into, drawn into a circle of illegal activity, both see an opportunity there and are dealing with someone who over the years has provided them with goods, money, whatever, and they are caught up in a cycle that, frankly, for many of them ends very badly. That is why, when we talk about this legislation, we are concerned that we aren't seeing the other pieces being put in place.

My colleagues have fought continuously for an increase in minimum wage so that parents who are working minimum-wage jobs have more disposable income. That's something that has not been accepted by this government. We have heard promises from this government about action on poverty. Just recently, there was a statement by the Premier that action on poverty may be delayed. The simple reality is that we can have as many administrative law changes as we want, and they may be positive, they may be useful, they may be rational, but if we're not dealing with the larger root causes out there, then these laws will be ineffective.

A few months ago, over the summer, I had an opportunity to talk to some criminal lawyers who do their work in downtown Toronto. They were talking about

who most of their clients were and what generated most of their business. Interestingly to me, there were two categories that really stood out: people with mental health problems and people with drug addiction problems. They said that if you had a very substantial mental health program in this society that dealt with people who had mental health crises or difficulties, if you had a program that substantially reduced drug addiction, their business would be dramatically reduced, and they would be very happy to move on to other parts of the law. There is all kinds of legal stuff to be done. Charles Dickens wrote about it; we've read about it. We know that lawyers will not go hungry if we reduce crime.

Again, when I look at this legislation, when I engage in these debates, I think about the legislation that is not before us. I think about the budget measures that are not before us. I think about the youth workers who are not out there, trying to break that bridge of trust that drug dealers are trying to build with young people.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, I gather from your delicate and subtle clue that you're indicating my time has come to an end. I will yield the floor back to you. Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): On behalf of all of us here, I just want to thank the pages once again. You've done an excellent job, and we certainly wish you well in life.

It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday, October 20, at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax-Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale-High Park	
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward-Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor-Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
		Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
		Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murdoch, Bill (IND)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of International Trade and Investment / Ministre du Commerce international et de l'Investissement
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme
		Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre
		Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services / Ministre des Petites Entreprises et des Services aux consommateurs
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
		Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Żakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Żimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Tim Hudak
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Kim Craitor
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Tim Hudak, Amrit Mangat
Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs / Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jean-Marc Lalonde
Sophia Aggelonitis, Ted Arnott
Wayne Arthurs, Toby Barrett
Pat Hoy, Jean-Marc Lalonde
Leeanna Pendergast, Michael Prue
Charles Sousa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Présidente: Linda Jeffrey
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: David Oraziotti
Robert Bailey, Jim Brownell
Linda Jeffrey, Kuldip Kular
Rosario Marchese, Bill Mauro
Carol Mitchell, David Oraziotti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Présidente: Julia Munro
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Michael A. Brown, Kevin Daniel Flynn
France Gélinas, Randy Hillier
Lisa MacLeod, Julia Munro
David Ramsay, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Jeff Leal
Reza Moridi, Yasir Naqvi
Lou Rinaldi, John Yakabuski
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jerry J. Ouellette
Laura Albanese, Ernie Hardeman
Andrea Horwath, Phil McNeely
Jerry J. Ouellette, Liz Sandals
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
Bas Balkissoon, Mike Colle
Kim Craitor, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Tony Ruprecht
Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Laurel C. Broten, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Helena Jaczek
Dave Levac, Shafiq Qaadri
Khalil Ramal, Laurie Scott
Peter Shurman
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Select Committee on Elections / Comité spécial des élections

Chair / Président: Greg Sorbara
Howard Hampton, Greg Sorbara
Norman W. Sterling, David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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